■ INFOTECH

Filipino wins Microsoft global award

■ BUSINESS/B1

Special Report: Surging crude puts RP on brink of crisis

■ SPORTS

Bad luck derails RP's Tyson Sy in Asian Formula Three

■ WORLD/A13

Brunei's Bolkiah marries Malaysian ex-newscaster

Young pro-GMA solons tutored on impeachment

By Gerry Lirio

THERE'S no such thing as a free lunch.

Twenty members of the House of Representatives whose families and political fortunes support President

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BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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Don't just dismiss resign calls, bishop told GMA

By Christian V. Esguerra

TAKE two account demands for your resignation.

President Macapagal-Arroyo got this piece of unsolicited advice from Jaro Archbishop Angel Lagdameo during their closed-door meeting at the Catholic Bishops Conference

Joker: Unity talks plain politicking

QUOTED President Joseph Estrada preaches forgiveness before the El Shaddai crowd at Luneta.

SO CLOSE yet so far from reconciling political differences are President Macapagal-Arroyo and former President Corazon Aquino during Mass on the occasion of the 22nd death anniversary of opposition leader Benigno Aquino Jr. at the Manila Memorial Park in Parañaque.

Another GMA ploy, say 2 former allies

By TJ Burgonio, Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and Christine O. Avendaño

MALACAÑANG administration Sen. Jokoy Arroyo yesterday dismissed talks of reconciliation between President Macapagal-Arroyo and indicted former President Joseph Estrada, saying these would not prosper because of legal roadblocks.

"So all these talks about reconciliation and [such] congeniality are plain and simple politicking," the senator said.

Two former allies of the President—Congress "Dixie" Soliman and Pimentel Mind—also consider the reconciliation talks just another political play of Mr. Arroyo, who is facing impeachment and calls that she resign because of allegations that she cheated in the 2004 presidential election.

Environment Secretary Michael Defensor had disclosed that reconciliation talks between the Arroyo and Estrada camps had begun, with Estrada seeking his release from house arrest in Tanay, Rizal, in recognizance to reconciliation.

Senatorial candidate Jinggoy Estrada, who was reelected in January 2001 by a popular mandate, confirmed talking to Defensor about his possi-

Bro. Mike still hopeful on reconciliation

By Cl C. Cabacungan Jr. and Pat Contreras

THE HANDSHAKE on center stage between President Macapagal-Arroyo and deposed President Joseph Estrada did not take place at the El Shaddai rally, but Mr. Arroyo remains hopeful about making reconciliation with her predecessor.

"By now Mike is relieving his call for reconciliation. As President, and thanks to Estrada, Mike for his support, I am ready to take steps to call on the rivals. Let us be united in that politics will not ruin our country," said the President in a speech after the birthday Mass for Bro. Mike Velarde at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila on Saturday night.

Although he was disappointed by the decision of the Arroyo and Estrada camps not to push through with the meeting on stage, the El Shaddai leader remained optimistic that his prayer-brokering efforts would eventually bear fruit.

"We will be busy meet together again, very soon. Let us pray that we will soon back here in Luneta, especially for that (reconciliation) unity," Velarde told reporters shortly after receiving the President in her car.

Velarde initially denied he was disappointed about the meeting that did not take place, but when pressed, he said: "I would have been happier if the reconciliation happened that day. Our country's problems would have been solved, and my problem would have been over."

Despite the kinks in the reconciliation talks, Velarde said discussions between the Arroyo and Estrada camps would continue.

Although no opposite formula had been discussed on how to achieve reconciliation, Ve-

Mass for Ninoy reunites Gloria, political foes

By Fe Zamora and Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THEY kissed, but they didn't make up.

Infact, former Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman aroused the ire hissed her former boss, President Macapagal-Arroyo, yesterday because "she gave me love and I was more here."

In fact, later in the afternoon, Soli-

mpt joined the launch of the "Black and White Movement." The new group promises to unite the so-called middle forces to push demands that Mr. Arroyo resign over allegations she rigged last year's election. (See story on Page A2.)

Soliman said Mr. Arroyo should not only sometime quitting now because there was a "big chance" she would be convicted if impeachment moves proceeded against her.

The Chief Executive turned up for the Mass commemorating the 22nd death anniversary of opposition leader Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr., a gathering led by ex-President Corazon Aquino and former Arroyo stalwarts who had distanced and rallied to her ouster.

Benigno Aquino was gunned down moments after he stepped off a plane on his return from self-exile in the United States to rally the opposition against the dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Marcos soldiers were convicted of murdering the opposition leader and were sentenced to life in prison.

Pressures on RP democracy

By Ariando Dervilla

THE 1987 CONSTITUTION Commission has been in place for only 10 years. Despite the Constitution's relatively short period of existence, a serious initiative has been mounted to revise the Charter in the State of the Nation Address of President Macapagal-Arroyo on July 25 when she called for the start of the "great debate" on a "fundamental change" of the system, including a shift to the parliamentary system within a bicameral congress.

ANALYSIS

The 1973 Constitution that underpinned the Marcos dictatorship lasted for only 14 years. Prior to this shift to the authoritarian system, the essentially democratic 1935 Constitution had a longer life—16 years.

Without going into examining the

PAPAL ENCOUNTER

From the cloud-shaped altar, Pope Benedict XVI (right) greets the multitude of young pilgrims who came to spend a World Youth Day vigil with him at Marienfeld near Cologne, Germany. (Story in The World, Page A8.)

Witnesses' lives take full turn

By Christian V. Esguerra

THEIR lives did a 180-degree turn when Bilibid "boy" Mayor and Imelda Cuto came out with their "jueteng" exposés.

When he was a top gambling lord in more not too long ago, Mayor was raking in as much as P2.5 million in jueteng collections even during the "lean months."

He could send his wife and all of his farmers (friends) to Hong Kong. He, too, would fly there just to dine with a friend, then fly back to Manila for dinner date.

When they were forced in their home province Albay, the Mayors would fly to Manila. One time, he and his family drove to Manila in a three-car convoy and went on a

A2
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
MONDAY, AUGUST 22, 2005

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Cha-cha panel to begin work

By Christine O. Avendaño

MALACAÑANG yesterday grabbed the initiative in the Charter change saga, announcing that a 50-member consultative commission tasked to gather proposed amendments would start work next month and finish the job by year's end.

The report of the consultative commission, to be composed of the "best and brightest minds," will be submitted to President Macapagal-Arroyo, according to the Palace. An advisory body will, in turn, submit an executive branch position to early January for Congress' scrutiny.

"Congress will have the final say on the amendments," Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said.

Malacañang vowed to take Charter change out of the deliberations as a Palace official said that El Shaddai leader Mike Velarde were drafting a measure to be offered for adoption by all political parties—those identified with the Arroyo administration as well as those in the "diverging opposition."

The official, who declined to be identified, said the proposed covenant would seek to bind the political parties under common goals in the face of the oil crisis and widespread poverty.

He added that the effort to amend the Constitution would serve as the parties' unifying factor. "And the Charter change [bid] could be a possible instrument or means for a coalition government," the Palace official said.

As if on cue, Ermita gave a confusing press briefing yesterday, announcing in response to inquiries of Executive Order No. 453 which directs the formation of a consultative commission to propose amendments and revisions to the 1987 Constitution.

The executive order provides that President Arroyo will appoint the 50 members of the commission, which will consult with various sectors on changes to be made to the 18-year old Constitution.

The Palace proposed that the commission be submitted to the Office of the President before Aug. 31.

Ermita said the "well-informed" members of the commission were to represent the national, regional and sectoral constituencies.

"We hope by Sept. 16 this consultative commission can start working," said Ermita, named chair of the organizing committee for the commission. "And the deadline given to for them to submit their 'definite' product to the President is about the end of the year, Dec. 31."

He said former University of the Philippines president Jose Abueva, whom President Arroyo earlier announced would be a member of the body, had submitted his own nominations. A committee under the Office of the President would make the recommendations to the President, he added.

Presidential Management Staff chief Rigoberto Tiglao, who will head the secretariat of the body, asked that nominations be sent to the website consom@yahoo.google.com.

"The Constitution is the most important document in the republic... and it's important that we intend through this commission to get the best and the brightest minds to really study the Constitution with a fine-tooth comb," Tiglao said.

Under the EO, a person is qualified to be a member of the commission if he is a Filipino citizen, a qualified voter, of recognized probity, competence, honesty and patriotism." Sitting public officials are prohibited from being members of the body.

The Palace has allotted P10 million to handle all the commission's work, which includes conducting nationwide consultations and public hearings with various sectors, according to the PMS chief.

Ermita said the commission would issue a "first hand" in determining the scope of topics to be considered, but added that members would be tackling economic, political and social provisions.

Definitely he said, the commission would tackle proposals on the mode of changing the Constitution whether through a constituent assembly or a constitutional convention and the form of government.

In her State of the Nation Address in July, President Arroyo called for a constitutional assembly to tackle the amendments and for a parliamentary-federal form of government to replace the current presidential system of government.

New anti-GMA coalition formed

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

A MAN coalitions called Black and White Movement has been formed to press for the ouster of President Macapagal-Arroyo when is facing impeachment in Congress for allegedly benefiting the most in the presidency.

The Black and White Movement, which includes members of the so-called Hyatt 10, yesterday vowed to unite the middle forces—the same groups that helped to bring down the Estrada administration and catapulted Ms Arroyo to power in 2001.

The coalition claimed that Ms Arroyo was still clinging to power despite the scandals besetting her administration because many groups that were formerly supporting refuse to be scared, and with groups supporting aided former President Joseph Estrada.

The coalition hopes to provide yet another group for the anti-GMA movement, which its leaders say reunite/regimented and weak.

"For the middle forces who were involved in Edsa I and II, coming out to the streets means being side by side with Dilimah and Marco Polo—an idea they find unacceptable," the coalition said in an instruction sheet for the workshops it organized yesterday.

Former Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman and former Education Secretary Florencio Abad, two of the 10 Cabinet officials who turned their backs on Ms Arroyo and joined calls for her to resign last month, joined the more than a 1,000 people mostly wearing black or white shirts who attended the program in Mandaluyong City.

Ms Arroyo also showed up in Edsa I and Edsa II are reluctant to come out now. They are confused, and the last Edsa [was a] group to support," founding member Lorenz Bautista told the listeners.

The coalition is looking at three options to get Ms Arroyo out of her office: Resignation, impeachment and ouster.

In a statement, the coalition said Ms Arroyo cheated in the last elections, citing the "Hello Garci" wiretapped conversation as proof, aside from the political developments and revelations the tape spawned.

"We believe that cheating is a moral issue, where there are no shades of gray. There is only black and white," the coalition said in a statement, explaining its official colors and name.

Students, the urban poor and wealthy professionals participated during the boat-hopping rally groups in Quezon City, where each shared what he or she believed to be the best option for Ms Arroyo.

Convention seeks ouster from Bidoya, Uy, said the best option was impeachment.

"Members of the urban poor have gotten tired of joining rallies. Since Ms Arroyo had said she would not resign, we shouldn't aim it to outside [of option, which is impeachment," Medina section Dolphus.

Meanwhile Emilia Lumawa, 59, said Ms Arroyo should voluntarily step down and be given "a graceful exit."

PROTEST AND REMEMBRANCE
Members of Gloria Step Down Movement-Youth demand the resignation of President Macapagal-Arroyo and Vice President Noli de Castro once as they honor the memory of the late Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr. at his monument on Roxas Ave. yesterday, the 22nd anniversary of the latter's assassination. (DR-KRUZ)

Ninoy holiday up to schools

MALACAÑANG has left it to the school authorities to decide whether to suspend classes or not today in observance of the 22nd death anniversary of the late Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita yesterday issued a proclamation giving unified criteria in both public and private schools the discretion to call for a "school holiday" today.

"[The school holiday is for] those who would want to give meaning to the martyrdom of Senator Aquino and to give the youth the chance to remember it," Ermita said in a press in Malacañang.

President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday hailed Aquino as a "martyr for national unity" and called on the nation not to forget the "profound sacrifice."

"Let us restore his memory and live by his ideals," said Ms Arroyo, who attended yesterday's Mass marking Aquino's death.

Aquino, a nemesis of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, was gunned down on Aug. 21, 1983, upon his return home from the United States where he had gone on exile. His murder has not been solved to this day.

In a statement, the President took the opportunity to call for national unity at a time her administration is reeling from the worst political crisis in its four year existence.

She said the lessons remained to the country in 1983 "to bring all Filipinos together behind one nation and one destiny."

"We had a vision for the Philippines that our down democratic and pluralist, and elevated democracy and social justice to a high pedestal," Ms Arroyo said.

Aquino likewise had a "vision that galvanized ordinary people to do great things at a time when they lived in fear and need," the President said.

"Today we search for the same spiritual and moral upliftment, the same strength and courage he brought home to the land," Ms Arroyo said.

Christine O. Avendaño

Majority lawmakers seek end to impeach debates

By Michael Lim Ubac

AMID of the public's growing impatience, administration lawmakers yesterday called for an end to the debates over procedural issues which had marred the impeachment proceedings against President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Representatives Marvelous Ullanan, Arnulfo Ulindo and Eduardo Zarate urged their colleagues in the House of Representatives to finish the debates over constitutional or "procedural" questions so the committee could finally determine if the impeachment complaint is sufficient in form and substance.

Ullanan, Ulindo and Zarate, all Mindanao allies, are members of the justice committee.

They called on the justice committee to get on with its task of determining if the impeachment complaint should be allowed to prosper and reach the Senate for trial.

The opposition bloc led by House Minority Leader Francis Escudero had stymied the majority in the chamber of trying to kill the impeachment process by throwing all sorts of legal roadblocks to prevent Ms Arroyo's ouster.

Ms Arroyo stands accused of committing impeachable offenses, including cheating her way to victory in the 2004 elections.

"I hope the justice committee would send up debates over which of the two issues should be tackled foremost to the panel since the timing of the respective position of its members is almost completed," said Ullanan, one of the lawmakers.

Two thorny issues have stalled deliberations at the committee level: Whether the committee should first resolve the prejudicial questions—such as whether the three impeachment complaints should be treated separately or incorporated into one, and whether it should go directly to the determination of form and substance of the complaints.

Both issues will be put to a vote on Tuesday.

Ullanan said a resolution of the two issues would pave the way for smooth discussions on the impeachment complaint based on the rules of procedure.

"We believe that once we hurdle the two contentious issues, we will proceed smoothly," he said.

Ullanan noted that committee chair Simeon Datumanong had been fair enough in allowing committee members and the complainants to declare their respective positions over prejudicial questions and the form and substance of the impeachment complaint.

"We call on everyone to maintain partnership and not throw areas of disagreement and impartiality in acting on the impeachment matter," he said.

Ullanan said the justice committee may "decide to bound" to submit its report to the plenary within 60 days. The impeachment case was referred to the panel on July 25.

"We should therefore act judiciously and expeditiously on the case," said Ullanan, noting that the impeachment process was both "political and judicial."

He said the Supreme Court's ruling on the Francisco case, which dealt with the filed impeachment proceedings against Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., had merged the amendment of the impeachment rules of the 11th Congress.

Jarque comes home as AFP begins reforms

By Nikko Dizon

CEBU—In the intimate hour of the midday rain, the family of former Army Capt. Rene Jarque yesterday gratefully welcomed him home for the last time.

His mother, Nilda, sobbed over her pain while his father, Rosendo, a retired military general, held her tightly as the crowd inside containing Jarque's remains was wheeled out by a GI-Bill to the congressional Nivas region from national highway (Nasa).

Moments later, Army Scout Rangers headed the wooden box into a black hearse.

Jarque's young wife, Gay, told both her sons.

Military custody Jarque, whose duty assignment caused him both respect and controversy, died after colliding cardiac arrest in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Friday (Saturday in the Philippines).

His wife said the stroke would be held at the Seminario de San Antonio in Forbes Park, Makati City tomorrow is tentatively set for Saturday at the Libingan ng mga Bayani.

Without saying it directly, the Armed Forces yesterday softened-edged Jarque's crusade against "corruption," one of the biggest sources of contention in the military.

Huge strides had been taken during the past few years to stop the practice. Chief of Staff was to consolidate the procurement bids and awards committees of the AFP into just one body, according to Lt. Col. Bienvenido Pascual, the military spokesperson.

"There used to be around 110 committees. AFP-wide," Pascual said. "By limiting just two committees we could easily monitor them. We can ensure that there would be no collusion (between suppliers and military officers)."

Without mentioning Jarque or his crusade, the official admitted "improvement" had benefited the AFP. "Its efforts have been put in place," he said. (See related story on Page A7.)

Shortly before the casket was brought out, Gay told the lecturers she would pursue her husband's wishes—mostly fighting corruption of the Armed Forces—and share them with others as he had when he was alive.

"I'll keep them. Yeah, I will keep them. That's what he was doing. He would reproduce his work and give it to everybody," Gay said.

She admitted her fear and apprehension whenever her husband came out with exposés and criticisms against the AFP.

"I would caution his coming out (in his statements). But I was afraid that maraming ding nagagalaw na mga (Maybe politicians had decisions he was killing many people. He was a fighter). And I hope makikulitan (we ignore ng mga ang) (how people would understand him more)," she said.

Jarque, a West Point graduate who resigned from the military in 1998 out of disillusionment, had been working in Jakarta since last year.

Gay said she was told her husband had a mild stroke while at his house on Friday (Saturday in the Philippines) but sought his driver's attention by walking below to his room.

He died in the hospital, Gay said.

The Jarques have three children aged 10, 7 and 3.

Jarque had told the lecturers that during his 12 years of service, he had witnessed senior officers committing procurement into activity personalities.

Pascual said the AFP leadership had directed key finance officers in the military to report directly to the chief of staff.

Quoting retired AFP chief of staff Dieter Abu, Pascual said this was the highest officer because responsible for corruption in the military. With Lodge A. del Puerto

Garcillano in US, Pimentel claims

By TJ Burgonio

WASHINGTON—Former Elections Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano remains a mystery but the latest speculation is that he had fled to the United States.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. yesterday said he had information Garcillano was in the United States and "is now staying in the house of his daughter in New Jersey."

According to Pimentel, his informants told him that Garcillano entered the US mainland more than a month after he slipped out of the country on July 14 via Singapore.

The opposition senator pinned down Garcillano's whereabouts in a letter to Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, asking him to coordinate with the US government to find Garcillano.

He said the DOJ could seek the help of US authorities in tracking down Garcillano on the basis of the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty.

"Under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty, the Philippines may get US help in secure (detained) witnesses for the needs of the country," he said.

Pimentel pointed out that Garcillano was ostensibly a fugitive from justice since the House of Representatives had issued a warrant for his arrest for snubbing its hearings on the "Hello Garci" tapes.

The warrant would be a ground for his repatriation, he said.

Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson earlier proposed the government tap Interpol and use its network of law enforcement agencies in foreign countries to track down Garcillano.

Garcillano, caught on tape supposedly plotting with President Macapagal-Arroyo to manipulate the 2004 elections, flew out of Manila for Singapore on July 14 and for another country the following day, leaving a litany of fruitless confrontation trails.

The controversial election official disappeared from public view and kept a low profile since copies of his wiretapped conversations with the President, dubbed the "Hello Garci" tapes, surfaced in June.

Zambo bombing suspects freed

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Three alleged members of the Abu Sayyaf arrested in connection with bomb attacks in this city have been freed on bail of P120,000, police said Tuesday.

"Those responsible for the bombings are free on bail," regional police head Chief Supt. Prospero Noble told dzBB radio.

The suspects—Adzmar Akbarsap, Ingrin Antonio Bahala, and Hanyat bin Ismapal-dia Sandra—were charged with attempted murder for two bombs that ripped through a parked vehicle and a hotel in this city on Aug. 18. Twenty people were wounded.

The families of the three men, however, condemned the arrest and accused authorities of torturing them into admitting the attacks. AFP

Witnesses' lives take full turn

Continued from A1

half-million-peso shopping spree for Gretti bag always criticized P100,000in cash.

It was so easy to source money for Ate's taste, he said.

Now, three months after he unchained and revealed everything he knows about the illegal activities rushed in his province, the former jueteng lord seems to have lost it all. Or has he?

Mayor is down to his last pair of white Lacoste sneakers. His wallet contains P1,000...if he's lucky. His cell phone is a cheap Nokia. Its "load" courtesy of friends and some Roxanne Carbullo lechuya who have taken him under their wing.

"That's my life now—a 180-degree turn from my previous one," Mayor told the Inquirer in an interview in the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) compound in Manila last Tuesday.

"Before, it's as if we were just sweeping money and it seemed there was no end to it," said the 50-year-old Mayor. "But I realized that it's people who should command money, not money commanding people."

Indeed, the events of the last three months, which reverberated into one of the biggest scandals involving President Macapagal-Arroyo, have taught him many valuable lessons on faith, family and friendship.

The same holds true for fellow witness Eufemia Cano, a confirmed former jueteng bag lady enshrouded in the dark side of local politics in the Visayas.

MAYOR

CANO

Closer to family

Mayor said he was much closer to his family now, although he hardly gets to see them since he testified before the Senate hearing investigation in May. That's because he would become a hotel from one safe house to another, courtesy of anti-gambling crusader Archbishop Oscar Cruz of Lingayen-Dagupan.

The tought Mayor to appreciate a short meeting or even the simplest gestures of kindness from his family.

The evening in the CBCP, Mayor briefly excused himself from the interview to have a moment with his wife—their third time to meet since he testified at the Senate. The couple embraced for a long time and when they returned, they were both teary-eyed.

Mayor said he cried when his youngest daughter sent him P1,000 for his daily expenses in the safe house. He said the amount was just half of the tip he usually gave to waiters and bus drivers during his heyday.

The daughter, he said, used to live a pampered life. He gave her a Ford Escape and P40,000 on her graduation.

Simple life

Now she survives on a minimum salary. Nevertheless, she has not forgotten her father and the mission it set to Mayor.

"Indeed, your family will never abandon you," he said.

The Mayors—the couple, their three children and four grandchildren—make ends meet with a combined P50,000 monthly salary (his with earns about half of the amount as an employee for a company in Manila).

Sometimes, one of his children would phone from Albay saying that the family had no money for the next day's meals. "It breaks my heart," he said.

Back in 2001 when he began his undisputed reign in Sto. Domingo town, he said each of his children, including the two who had families of their own, would get a P40,000 allowance from him. His wife Penny would get the same amount for shopping.

Real friends

"Back then, I thought we could never survive with P100,000," he recalled. "Now, I realize that even P1,000 has so much value."

Mayor said his downfall began when he ran and lost in the second race in Daraga, Albay, in May 2004. He gave up his jueteng empire, which he had started building as early as the 1980s, in December the year before.

Politics uprooted his former dry said mate, he discovered who his real friends were. Hardly any one was outside of his family. Mayor did not get into the details.

He has found a handful of genuine supporters since he turned his back on jueteng and campaigned against it alongside archbishop Cruz's friends up there Lingayen-Dagupan.

There was at the Church-provided safe houses he forged a strong bond between Mayor and Cano, the bishop's two remaining key witnesses who had testified at the Senate. It's a new-found friendship nurtured by a common cause and a shared experience.

Lipstick money

Cano also left an affluent lifestyle. Some are her jet-setting days to Hong Kong and Singapore, her schooling and dealing with local politicians that padded her bank accounts.

She recalled the days when retired Bicol police director Benjamin Mesquerda, the alleged bagman of Malacañang Rep. Jesus Miguel "Bikoy" Arroyo-another uncle, Negros Occidental Rep. Ignacio "Igpit" Arroyo, purportedly gave her P50,000 on the spot "for lipstick."

She narrated seeing in a safe house "smaller than her dressing room in her house in Mandaue."

Another time, she said she spent 18 hours without food or water because the owner of the safe house had an emergency Caesarean delivery.

One night, she had to sleep on a wooden bench, or stand she had to sleep in a curled position like dwarf to sleep on the floor and woke up with a sore back. Nevertheless, she attended the Senate hearing looking none the worse after a bad night.

For the truth

"I really admire these people," Cruz said of Mayor and Cano. "They left a rather luxurious life and now they're experiencing all these troubles for the sake of the truth."

The two swear they could not have gone this far without Cruz and the other prelates quietly supporting his anti-gambling crusade.

"He makes us feel he will always be there no matter what," Cano said.

Mayor admitted his initial motivation for coming out in May was purely self-serving.

He said he approached Cruz because alleged jueteng lords, like Bataan's "Bong" Pineda, Charito Magbalon and Batangas Gov. Armando Sandoval, were purportedly planning to take over the last anti-casino/gambling operations nationwide with Malacañang's blessing.

No turning back

But soon after his initial meeting with the bishop, Mayor had a change of heart. "I realized that jueteng really had to be stopped," he said. "He were supressing the poor day while enriching ourselves. That's not fair."

There is no turning back now, he said, even if the former lawmakers, senate dominol and senator Richard "Dick" Gordon and Defensor Secretary Abraham "Boy" Ermita have joined the other side.

Just last week, Mayor said he was offered P10 million to have Cruz and close the Arroyos of any involvement in jueteng. He said the money would have solved his financial woes.

But the former multimillionaire said money wouldn't buy his friendship with Cruz, who has treated him like a son.

"Maybe God has a plan for me," he said. "I didn't expect to get involved in jueteng then and now. I'm campaigning against it. Whatever God's plan is, I want to finding way back to Him."

Corrections

IN YESTERDAY'S issue, a Metro story on Page A10—"Woman bank employee slain on Pasay street"—misnamed the filmmaker. Rolando Bonjuan destitute was driving on Sutton by morning when he was shot and killed. The vehicle was a Lancer—not a Land Cruiser.

• • •

IN YESTERDAY'S editorial on Page A14, "Kids behind bars," it was misstated that Consuelo Foundation was a "philanthropic organization of billionaire Chito Madrigal Gutierrez." The Consuelo Zobel Alger Foundation (Consuelo Foundation for short) is a private foundation named after its founder Consuelo Zobel Alger. It was established in 1988 to improve the quality of life of the advantaged children, women and families in the Philippines and abroad.

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Readers may send their comments for correction of factual errors to or bring it to Nora Ura, ombudsman Philippine Daily Inquirer, PIL Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mayapamas Street, Makati City (tel. nos. 897-8482-84, e-mail address: ombud@inquirer.com.ph and fax no. 896-0865).

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Philippines' 'coconet' a finalist in international contest

BAGUIO CITY—It is indeed the renaissance for the coconut industry. First it was virgin coconut oil. Today people are going here over coco bio-diesel or coconutchyl ester.

Coming now another product from the tree of life—coconut geotextile.

Philippine coconut geotextile or coconet was chosen as a finalist in the World Challenge sponsored by Newsweek magazine and the British Broadcasting Corp. with the theme, "Coconut was cited for promoting livelihoods in the Philippines. It serves as a surrogate tree bed by holding loose soil together, according to the World Challenge website which announced this year's 12 finalists.

The award is given to projects that **show enterprise and innovation in the grassroots level.**

The winners which will be awarded $20,000 by Shell, will be chosen through online voting at www.theworldchallenge.co.uk that will end on Oct. 16.

Special mention was made of Dr. Antonio Arboleda of Ateneo University for pioneering the conversion of coconut coir into geotextile.

Arboleda recently received a Global 100 Eco-Tech award at World Expo 2005 in Aichi, Japan.

The World Challenge website said 1,500 families were benefiting from the use of coconut which is being produced at the rate of 10,000 sq. m. per month.

So far, the biggest market for coco geotextile is China, which needs around 1 billion kilos of coco fiber, coco peat and other high-end value coconut products a year.

Plans are afoot to export P30 billion worth of geotextiles from the Bicolno peninsula in the Bicol region to China, in mid-mid-season there.

The Philippine Coconut Administration said this was just a fraction of what the coconut industry could produce at 1.6 million metric tons a year.

A documentary about coco geotextile will be shown on the BBC World cable channel on Sept. 24. It will also be featured in the Aug. 29 special issue of Newsweek.

Of the 12 finalists, two others aside from the Philippines were from Asia—in the Western Islands and India.

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FORMER President Corazon Aquino prays at the tomb of her husband, opposition leader Benigno Aquino Jr.

HAWAII Rep. Aquino "Boci" Aquino and former Sen. Teresita Aquino-Oreta offer flowers at the Ninoy Aquino marker on the Nala tarmac where their brother was assassinated in 1983.

MILITANT youths rally aboard jeepneys against the Arroyo administration at the Ninoy Aquino Monument on Ayala Avenue in Makati City.

Mass for Ninoy reunites Gloria, political foes

Front page A1

With daughter Evangeline Lozador (Left) holding her hand, Ms Arroyo takes care in a blue dress, prayed, smiled and stared at the flowers in front of her throughout the homilies. Mass. Her son Dato and his wife Carat also joined her.

Tension

But tension was in the air.

"I know the President has made a special sacrifice to come. I'm sure she's doing it for Ninoy and all of you are doing it for Ninoy," Ms Aquino said in brief remarks after the Mass.

On July 8, Ms Aquino called on Ms Arroyo to make the "ultimate sacrifice" and heed the growing call for her to stand down.

The former President's call capped a series of demands by political and business allies for Ms Arroyo to quit. It was triggered by the mass resignation of Solicitors, six other Cabinet secretaries and three agency heads, collectively known as the "Hyatt 10."

Sullivan used to be one of the President's favorite Cabinet members, often leaving girl talk with his own coffee.

Dialed close she had sang with men about the "Impeachable Woman"—Arroyo's hapless lawyer—during the Wiet, Sullivan giggled: "It's not a very impeachable phenomenon."

"The administration is really disappointing in one prominent area: corruption. Some even taking the required 79 signatures," Solomon said at the launch. One third, or 79, of the House membership of 236 is required to move the impeachment case against Ms Arroyo to the Senate for trial.

In a trial, Solomon said, "We are sure of a conviction."

More uncertainty

Former Education Secretary Raúl Alcad, one of the Hyatt 10 who also attended the Mass, said at the launch of the Black and White Movement: "If the impeachment process is frustrated, which will the anger of the people get? It will put us in more uncertain direction."

Alcad and former Customs Commissioner Bert Gene de Jesus behind the President and Ms Aquino. "We are here for Ninoy and for everything that he stood for," Alcad said.

"It's heart of GMA to come here," said a former member of Aquino's Cabinet who asked not to be identified.

But Teresita Ortiz, former presidential adviser for the peace process (2000), was spared the discomfort of having to face the President. Ortiz was seated in the third row.

Ms Arroyo was a no-show at last year's Ninoy anniversary, which Malacañang had declared a public holiday.

Aquino said her sister-in-law, Lupita Kashiwara, had invited the President.

"Lupita told me about it on Friday," she said.

An unopposed minority floor leader, Kashiwara has been Ms Arroyo's media consultant and image maker since last year's election.

Aquino joked that the employees from the four organizations that sued by the Benigno Aquino Foundation were also requesting Malacañang to declare Ninoy's 22nd death anniversary a public holiday.

Since the date falls on a Sunday, the holiday could be observed today, Monday. (See related story on Page A2.)

"I hope you will be kind enough to grant their request," Aquino said at the award ballet Intercontinental.

Ms Arroyo simply smiled.

Foundation

The Aquino Foundation has sued the Center for Agrarian and Rural Development (CARD), TSO, Development Academy, the Center for Community Transformation and the ABS-CBN Bayan Foundation for providing livelihood loans to some 1.5 million households in some of the country's poorest communities.

Aquino said the foundation set by the four micro-finance institutions (MFIs) is helping impoverished Filipinos showed the other "dimension of people power."

"People power" referred to the mass of Filipinos who gathered at Edsa in February 1986, eventually toppling the 20-year rule of Ferdinand Marcos. In January 2005, a massive demonstration at Edsa also ousted Joseph Estrada.

"Because of what happened in 1986 and 2001, many have developed the notion that people power is something we summon only in times of political crises," Aquino said.

"But two years ago, the Aquino Foundation started paying tribute to institutions which have been quietly 'empowering' poor communities nationwide. Among the first 'People Power People' members were the Coupler for Health and Development Carmel Edilaga housing projects.

The four NPOs were represented by their leaders: Ruth Galiasta for CCT, Ana Alja for CARD, Rubeta de Lara for TSO and Rene Raya for ABS-CBN Bayan Foundation.

Young pro-GMA . . .

Front page A1

Macapagal-Arroyo resident this noon-enough.

Along with senior administration-House officials, they were invited to a luncheon in the President's house at the North Wing building, an hour before the impeachment hearing began on Wednesday.

According to one of the young House members, the invitation, relayed by phone at around 11 a.m. that same day, was clear. "It was a time-have-you-lunch for administration members." It was to be hosted by the former's political adviser Gabriel Claudio in her behalf, they were told.

The food was sumptuous enough, the senators said, noting that it was provided by the same caterer behind the power dinners hosted by Speaker Jose de Venecia at his house in Intramuros Village, Makati City.

Not enough

But here's the catch. Over lunch, they were thrilled for not doing enough to defend Ms Arroyo in the impeachment hearing. Of the 1-49 or so presidential-House bloc members present, about a dozen are young, 8 or 10 of whom, among them Robert Jaworski Jr. of Pasig, Willie Revilla of Manila and Raul Gonzalez of Iloilo.

They were also asked questions like: Why wouldn't they be in aggressive in Representation Parents Teachers Association (Pateros Carmelo of South Cotabato and Alan Peter Cayetano of Taguig-Pateros, who were all vice chairmen articulating their case against Ms Arroyo?

The President's senior wife was not there if all of the presidential-House members showed up for the luncheon.

But they spotted about 20 early birds among the senior members, including Makati by Lualhati Benjamin Negrete, Bayan representatives Simeon Datumanong, Prospero Pichay, Rodolfo Agustino of Nueva Ecija, Loni Villafuerte of Camarines Sur and some members of the "Spice Boys," who had headed the impeachment of President Joseph Estrada in January 2001.

Buffet

All the senior House members took turns cajoling the young House members as they waited for their turn at the buffet of bola-bola, chicken kaldereta, fresh lumpia and fried chapsi, among other dishes.

There was plenty of food at there were a lot of questions and interjections in the young House members.

The young House members were side given blue ribbons to wear during the hearing for easy identification during roll call and to counter Farauleros, Cumcalles and Cayetanos, who all wore pink ribbons.

They were given briefing papers, or what they called "talking points" on the impeachment, including copies of the complaint filed by lawyer Vicente Evangelista against then Ombudsman Aniano Desierto during the 12th Congress.

When recognized by Datumanong, chair of the justice committee, during the impeachment hearing, a young pro-administration congressman, they were told, was supposed to argue that they should be only see impeachment complaints against the President each year and that the rest of the complaints must be junked.

Try gov't channel

They were also told to make themselves readily available for media interviews. "If you can't make it in the bayanes at ANC," a young congressman quoted a senior House member as saying, "go see and talk to Freddie Aguilar (government star) PTV-4. Freddie has a program on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. to 10 p.m., Monday to 10 p.m."

Another congressman asked what senior House members thought of Rep. Joel Villanueva of the Citizen Against Crime and Corruption who allegedly made an incoherent argument by misusing such word bumper during the televised hearing last week.

Villanueva is reportedly connected by Channel 11, a television station owned by his father, defeated presidential candidate Mr. Eddie Villanueva, according to a young congressman. "Even if he looks dumb, he is in the Channel 11 headline news," he said.

Pichay, who was named at the presidential table, with the press, denied told us building, convinced the young House members signing the impeachment.

He cited Environment Secretary Michael Defensor who, he said, successfully reasoned the "Hello Garci" tape controversy two weeks ago. "Mike got it all wrong, all because he's still too young," he reportedly said.

After lunch, all the pro-administration House members went straight to the impeachment hearing, but no one among them, a young congressman noted, went to Sto. Niño.

Bidding saves AFP millions

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

AMID allegations of widespread corruption in military procurement, the United Nations of the Philippines is now purchasing most of its supplies and services through public bidding to ensure transparency.

Defense Undersecretary Jose Santos, who chairs the Department of National Defense's Bids and Awards Committee (DNC), said the military had made it a policy to have all contracts awarded through open and competitive public bidding.

For start, the Armed Forces had been procuring most of its supplies and services through direct deals with favored suppliers. Procurement officials would "shop around" and choose who among available suppliers would get the lucrative contracts.

Under the new setup adopted last year, according to Santos, the AFP-BAC handles contracts below P50 million.

Contracts above P50 million are handled by the DND-BAC.

AFP-BAC chair Navy Rear Adm. Jorge Becerdo said they have generated savings of nearly P10 million from the 14 contracts for equipment repairs and other services so far awarded this year.

For these 14 projects, the AFP allocated P86.7 million but was able to lower the cost to P76.8 million through public bidding.

Bellaviten said they also saved about P20 million from the P600-million allocated for the procurement of Army boots, handkerchiefs cotton and pouches.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, August 22, 2005
Queenship of Mary

1st Reading: Is 9:1-6
Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the family of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.

The angel came to her and said, "Rejoice, full of grace, the Lord is with you." Mary was troubled at these words, wondering what this greeting could mean.

But the angel said, "Do not fear, Mary, for God has looked kindly on you. You shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call him Jesus. He will be great and shall rightly be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the kingdom of David, his ancestor; he will rule over the people of Jacob forever and his reign shall have no end."

Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be if I am a virgin?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the holy child to be born shall be called Son of God. Even your relative Elizabeth is expecting a son in her old age, although she was unable to have a child, and she is now in her sixth month. With God nothing is impossible."

Then Mary said, "I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me as you have said." And the angel left her.

Commentary:

Adam we hear the story of the first disciple and believer in Luke's community, who models for all disciples of the Word made flesh who dwells among us in Incarnation, in the Scriptures and in our lives by baptism, and in the people he has made his own on earth. Our God is Lord of history, not just Israel's but all peoples, all nations and all the earth. Our God is the fulfillment of all the hopes, the prophecies, the promises of the human race for millions of years. Our God is the Word made flesh among us forever. This presence is with us always in the Scriptures, in the Eucharist, in the Church, in the poor and in those who cry out for justice, who obey the Word that they have heard and seek the coming of God's will and God's kingdom on earth now. This is what we pray for in the Our Father and this is what Mary models as believer and disciple when she answers in the tradition of Moses, Isaiah, David and many others: "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord." This is our dignity, our calling and it is the way the Kingdom of God comes to earth.

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Asean, European Union universities set Manila meet

THE ASEAN-EU University Network Programme (AUNP), a joint higher education cooperation program financed by a network of top Asean universities and the European Union, will hold the first meeting of its grant-holders on Aug. 25 and 26 at Sofitel Tocabo Hall of the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City.

The meeting shall provide an opportunity for an exchange of experiences and ideas, as well as information and contacts, that may prove useful in building partnerships among the universities in the two regions.

Through AUNP, schools in the Asean University Network (AUN) and the European Union collaborate on the implementation of projects in the areas of human resource development, curriculum development and applied research.

After two calls for proposals, 28 projects involving 132 EU and Asian universities were selected for funding.

The WORLD

Edito Lorenzo B. Suarez

Pope wraps up visit with huge Mass

COLOGNE, Germany—Pope Benedict XVI was to give a huge open-air Mass Sunday to wrap up the first foreign trip of his pontificate in which he fulfilled his pledge to build "bridges of friendship" with Jews and Muslims.

The Mass at Marienfeld park, expected to be attended by 800,000 Roman Catholics, is the culmination of the World Youth Day jamboree, inverted two decades ago by the Pope's charismatic predecessor John Paul II.

The public appearances of the universally shy Benedict during the four-day visit to his native Germany were closely watched for signs of how he compares with John Paul II, who even in his later years attracted by illness would swoon huge crowds, reaching out particularly to young people.

Saturday's visit to Cologne's synagogue was historic from at least 700,000 young Catholics gathered for an open-air prayer vigil at Marienfeld, a former mine complex outside Cologne, where he told them "false revelations" in contrast to the revelation of Jesus to answer "only from God."

But the 78-year-old Pope admitted there was "much that could be criticized" in the Catholic Church. "It is a sin with good life and bad faith."

Benedict was due to return to Rome on Sunday evening at the end of what is being seen as a highly successful visit during which he met German Jewish and Muslim leaders.

During his landmark visit to Cologne's synagogue on Friday...only the second ever by a pope to a Jewish place of worship...he condemned the "unimaginable crime" of the Holocaust in an address to Jewish leaders.

And on Saturday he urged Muslim leaders to do more to combat the "cruel fanaticism" of terrorism that aimed to prevent coexistence between Christians and Muslims.

But delivering the same kind of conciliatory message he had given to Jews the day before, he said he was "profoundly convinced that we must not yield to negative pressures in our midst, but affirm the values of mutual respect, solidarity and peace."

Reminding them of their "great responsibility" in educating their young, he told the Muslim delegation who met him in Cologne there was "no room for apathy and disengagement, and even less for partiality and racist tension."

As he had with the Jewish community, Benedict acknowledged the blemish-ridden history of relations between Christians and Muslims. "The mistakenness of those and events should fill us with shame, for we know only too well what atrocities have been committed in the name of religion."

"The lessons of the past must help us to avoid repeating the same mistakes," said the Pope. "We must work party of reconciliation and learn to live with respect for each other's identity."

Meanwhile, many young pilgrims spent the night in the huge Marienfeld park to await the arrival of the Pope for the Mass that he is to celebrate with hundreds of bishops, the climax of his visit.

Security was tight for the papal visit with fears heightened by the summer's terror attacks in London, with 4,000 police deployed in Cologne and the surrounding area.

In addition, some 4,000 private security guards were on duty for the duration of the Pope's four-day sojourn.

Nato supplied seven radar planes to patrol the skies and other aircraft must apply for special permission to fly over the area.

Following the Mass the Pope was expected to attend to organizers the venue of the next youth jamboree in 2008, which the Catholic news agency ANSA said would be in Sydney in Australia. AFP

PILGRIMS huddle in blankets for warmth in the early morning prior to the Holy Mass with Pope Benedict XVI at the Marienfeld, near Cologne, Germany, Aug. 21. —

Besieged Bush defends cost of Iraq war

CRAWFORD, Texas—US President George W. Bush, besieged on his ranch by relatives of US soldiers killed in Iraq, launched a five-day campaign on Saturday to defend the war as an increasingly skeptical US public.

In his weekly radio address from his Prairie Chapel property Bush said that the way would help avert another attack like the Sept. 11 terrorist strikes and that the best way to honor fallen US troops was to defeat global terrorism.

"We must finish the task that our troops have given their lives for and honor their sacrifice by completing their mission," said Bush, whose approval ratings have slipped to some of the lowest levels of his presidency.

More than 1,800 US soldiers have been killed in Iraq and thousands more wounded in a conflict with a price tag in the tens of billions of dollars.

A recent poll found that a majority of Americans...57 percent...believe that the war has made the United States more vulnerable to terrorist attacks, despite Bush's frequent arguments that the conflict has made them safer.

US soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan "know that if we do not confront these evildoers abroad, we will have to face them one day in our own cities and streets, and they know that the safety and security of every American is at stake in this war, and they know we will prevail," he said.

Bush's five-week stay at the ranch has been marked by a high profile protest against the war in Iraq, led by Cindy Sheehan, who says she wants to face-to-face meeting with the president.

Sheehan, who met with Bush shortly after her son Casey was killed in Iraq in 2004, left the makeshift camp outside the ranch late last week to tend to her sick mother, but promised to return soon.

Bush was to travel to Utah on Monday to address a major veterans group, and head to Idaho Wednesday to speak with members of the Idaho National Guard, as well as praise forces who played a key role in the Afghanistan campaign. AFP

COULD-HAVE-BEEN ATTACK A MONTH AGO

Mystery still shrouds failed London bombings

By Robert-Hue Pinwear

LONDON—One month on, and even with the suspected perpetrators in custody awaiting trial, mystery shrouds the failed attempt one month ago Sunday to repeat the brutal July 7 bombings in London.

Blatant extremists, inspired if not deterred by Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network, were reportedly behind both the July 7 and July 21 attacks on three Underground subway lines and a double-decker bus.

In the first case, 56 people died, including four apparent suicide bombers—three of them born in Britain, the fourth a Jamaican-born convert to Islam.

No one died in the second attempt, allegedly carried out mainly by Ethiopian immigrants from East Africa, but it shook Londoners to a greater degree—and led the next day to the police shooting of an innocent Brazilian worker.

With its biggest ever criminal investigation still very much under way, the Metropolitan Police have not established a firm link between the two groups—although it is strongly suspected there is one.

For that reason, its commissioner Sir Ian Blair said this week, there is every reason to fear that a third cell, or more, are out there, waiting to pounce.

"Intuitively, there are such similarities between the methodology and the equipment that we must think there is a possibility of others," he told the Evening Standard newspaper.

Detectives, drawing on their experience with Irish Republican Army (IRA) bombing campaigns in the 1980s and 1990s, focused intensely on the second incident, sensing it would turn out to be a goldmine of evidence.

There were—Yasin Hassan Omar, 24, Hamdi Mohammed, 23, and Muktar Said Ibrahim, 27—have been charged with attempted murder, conspiracy and possession of explosives at the Warren Street and Oval subway stations and the Shepherd's Bush bus.

Ibrahim, also known as Ismail, 27, was arrested in Rome on July 29 on suspicion of trying to carry out an attack on Shepherd's Bush station. He is in custody here.

Another suspect, Manfo Kwaku Asiedu, 32, is also being held on suspicion of conspiracy to murder after a discarded rucksack was found in a west London park two days after July 21.

Neither the first nor the second group left suicide or valve managers claiming responsibility or serving out martyrs, but al-Qaeda's second in command Ayman al-Zawahiri has condoned their actions.

Jeremy Binnie, an analyst with Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre in London, said it was "entirely possible that the second group might have been independently planning another kind of attack and reconfigured their plan" in order to duplicate the first group.

The July 7 group probably acquired its bomb-making skills from Pakistan, then decided what its targets would be upon their return to Britain, Binnie told AFP this week.

On the other hand, the July 21 cell had "very different bomb technology from the first group, and their bombs didn't go off," raising the prospect that they had no "outside assistance" and tried to assemble their bombs themselves.

Binnie also believed that al-Qaida, more notorious for the Sept. 11 attacks in the United States in 2001, was likely to implement in the London bombers, and not the commander of operations.

"As al-Qaida becomes less of an organization, it becomes more of an ideology to itself ... To be al-Qaida, all you have to do is go out and do something. You don't actually have to have any contact with Bin Laden," he said.

The investigation into the London bombings was overshadowed this week by allegations—strenuously denied by Blair—of a cover up in the shooting the day after July 21 of Brazilian electrician Jean Charles de Menezes.

De Menezes was killed by armed police in a south London subway station in the mistaken belief that he was a suicide bomber, but information leaked to ITV television this week seriously contradicts the initial version of events.

"We have apologized and we take responsibility for it," the police commissioner told BBC radio this week as an independent probe into the 27 year-old man's death continued. AFP

Philamlife unveils the most flexible life insurance plan in the market

Philamlife, the largest and most diversified life insurance company in the country, recently launched its newest product, QuantumFlex.

QuantumFlex is a whole life plan that caters to dollars. By definition, a whole life plan provides the insured individual coverage for life. Generally, whole life plans are payable for life, but not QuantumFlex. It has four fixed limited payment options: 5 years to pay, 9 years, 10 years and 15 years. These 4 paying period options are guaranteed not to change.

Moreover, QuantumFlex insurance coverage DOUBLES on the third year at NO EXTRA COST. For example, a QuantumFlex plan of P200,000 coverage on the first year doubles to P400,000 on the third year. Importantly, to be individual paying capacity, he or she can choose to pay his QuantumFlex premiums in as short as 1 year or spread out over 15 years.

Thus, QuantumFlex is perfect for those who want the flexibility and freedom to choose their ideal payment option. Persons like high net worth individuals and OFWs can pick the 5 year option for the fastest way to get covered. OFWs, in particular, might find this option the most attractive, since their contracts are usually good for three years.

Executives and entrepreneurs can choose to go with the most moderate 9-year period, which is neither too short nor too long. Professionals like doctors might want to go with the 10 year payment period, since they are almost guaranteed of a steady stream of earnings in the years to come.

Meanwhile, career government employees, teachers and media talk and file employees will find QuantumFlex's 15-year option the most affordable, since their payments will be spread out over a longer period of time. Eventually, no matter what a person's career or profession is, there is a QuantumFlex plan that will appeal to him.

QuantumFlex is available in both peso and dollar denominations and can be tailored to fit a person's different financial requirements. Its dividends and optional benefits can help provide for one's protection, health, education or retirement needs. QuantumFlex can likewise offer comprehensive accident coverage up to age 72, replacement income when one is confined to a hospital, and disability income.

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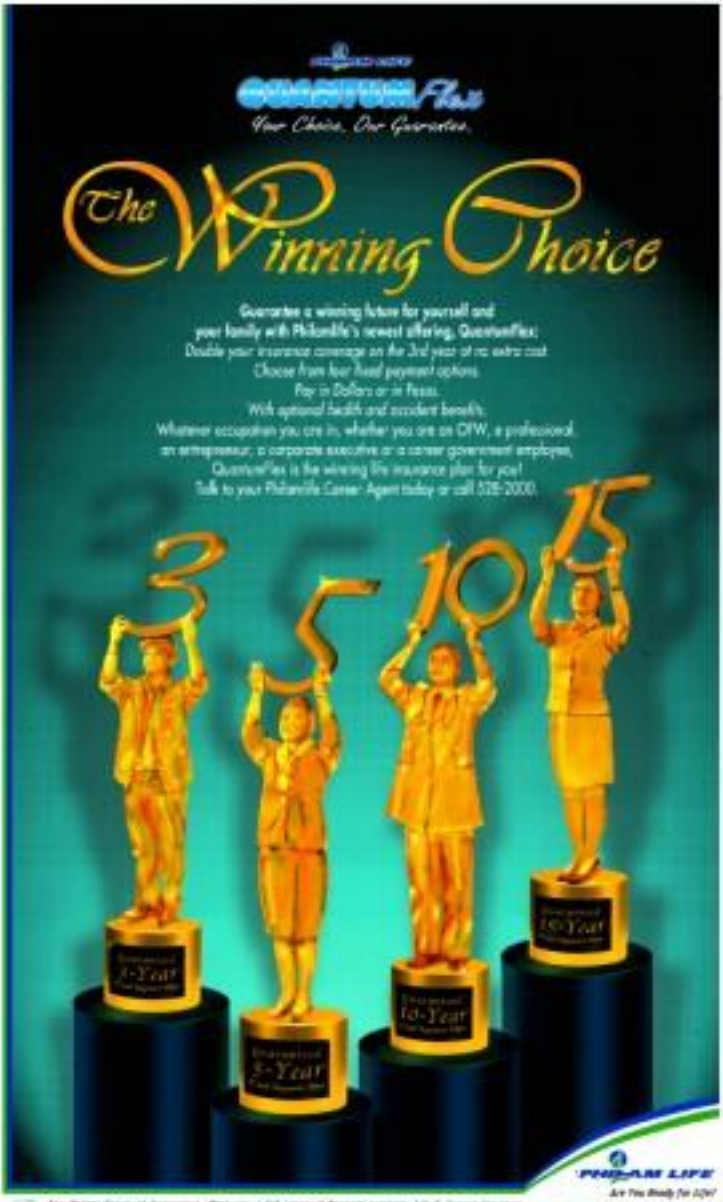

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Ecuador deploys troops to end strike

(AGO AGRE) Ecuador—Ecuador has deployed army troops to oil-producing Amazon region and declared an end to a six-day strike there that had sent lines through the industrial world.

Interior Minister Mauricio Gandara said late Saturday he had been informed that two dozen of the strike-hit Andean region "had decided to end the strike."

"We are glad that reason has prevailed and people will be returning to work because the damage from the strike has been enormous, reaching about $100 million," the minister said.

But worker representative Guadalupe Llori disputed that assessment.

"We are considering just a suspension to be able to hold talks with the national government," she said AFP in a telephone interview.

Earlier in the day troops were deployed to clear road blockades and guard oil facilities from attack, the state oil firm Petroecuador said in a statement.

"With the suspension of the road blocks several lanes are have managed to reopen some roads and gain access to the operational areas, thanks to which the oil workers can restart operations in those stations and wells which are not heavily affected" by the protest, the statement said.

The government of President Alfredo Palacio declared a state of emergency in Sucumbios and Orellana provinces Wednesday where protests have grown demanding a greater share of revenues.

The protests have forced Ecuador to suspend oil exports, a key source of foreign exchange, costing the country some $30 million a day in lost revenues.

Oil prices shot higher Friday after the suspension added to fears over tight global supply. New York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in September, rallied $3.06 or $65.36 per barrel in closing trade.

Ecuador is South America's fifth-largest oil producer and more than half of its exports go to the United States. It also supplies Asian countries.

Petroecuador's normal production is 23 million barrels a day. The country can produce another 140,000 barrels a day, but these output has been cut in about 110,000 barrels because of the disputes, and since 2001, a spokesperson for the private oil firms.

Petroecuador has offered to make up any shortfalls in domestic oil needs, President Hugo Chavez's office said.

AFP

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Japan to defer bid for UN seat

TOKYO — Japan will give up its bid to secure a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for the time being after it failed to win enough international support, a daily said Sunday.

Japan, the second largest UN donor after the United States, has been jointly lobbying for permanent council membership with Brazil, Germany and India as part of the so-called Group of Four or G-4.

The G4 proposal calls for increasing council membership from 15 to 25, with six new permanent seats without veto power — one each for Brazil, Germany, India and Japan and two for the African region, and four non-permanent seats.

A two-thirds majority or 128 votes is needed in the 183-member General Assembly for adoption. But the Asahi Shimbun daily said only 90 nations, including Russia and France, supported the G4 blueprint.

The United States, Japan's closest ally, has said it supports Japan's bid but not that of the three others. The Group proposal is also opposed by China, Japan's regional rival, and the 53-member African Union.

Any of the five current permanent members—Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States—could veto the proposals being considered by the 329 General Assembly delegates this month. AFP

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SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Molavidrez

BADMINTON 2005 BT World Badminton Championships, 10:30 a.m., STAR Sports – Check out the Finals live from the Arrowhead Pond in Anaheim.

TENNIS Nycomed Southern Financial Group Masters, 1 p.m. (ET) and 8:30 p.m., ESPN Sports – Take another look at the finals and highlights from Cincinnati.

JUN-JUN Cabatac of La Salle (5) and Arsenal Santos of FEU dispute possession while Toni Jeffrin Chan (6) and Archel Joseph Pan (8) look on.

Sputtering Tamaraws squirm past Archers

By Jasmine N. Payo

SHOWING the composure that kept them on top all season, the Far Eastern U Tamaraws escaped with a 70-69 victory over the La Salle Archers in the UAAP basketball tournament yesterday at the jampacked Araneta Coliseum.

"I told them that whatever happens, we must focus on our defense," said FEU coach Ariel Vanguardia, "We turned the ball over in our last two possessions, but La Salle still wasn't able to connect."

Arsenal Santos displayed another impressive all-around game with 16 points, 14 rebounds and a season-high eight blocks for the Tamaraws, who kept the solo lead at 6-1.

Jumbo, the University of the East Warriors pounded the University of Santo Tomas Tigers, 86-52, to keep second spot at 5-2.

The Warriors banked on a strong fourth quarter performances of Rufino Custodio and Mark Bedhoya, who finished with 20 points apiece to downing the Tigers to their eighth loss in 8 games.

The Archers, who fell to 1-6, failed to connect even after the Tamaraws turned the ball loose in the closing seconds and nearly blew a 70-64 lead.

In junior play the Tamaraws romped the Baby Tamaraws in overtime, 84-77, while the Cubs squashed Land Rat Regis, 79-75.

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97
23rd SEA Games

Moying slams Lim over Fiba suspension

"FEW can escape an alien to advance the interest of Filipinos!"

This was how Philippine Basketball Federation president Manuel Hamilton slammed the most recent attempt by the basketball association of the Philippines to use ousted Joaquin Loreto Lim to front a public relations stint for the national team that he pushed down the basketball route in the 22nd Southeast Asian Games is not going to happen.

"Mr. Lim wants to become our basketball hero by coming" said Hamilton. "He wants to hold the Philippine flag by using the names of RP to the Olympic committee member-ship roster as you can detect in the staging of the SEAG basketball event.

"Ang hangin-hangin ng ulo ni Lim (Lim's head is swollen)," added Hamilton.

Meanwhile, chief of staff Atty. Arnel Ignacio disclosed Monday that the government is set to file an appeal for the lifting of media ban that the International Basketball Federation (Fiba) recently imposed on the Philippines.

The PBF head pointed out that the ban will not affect the 23-man roster of the SEAG basketball team.

"We are confident that, this time, Fiba will order us to lift the ban," Ignacio said in remarks regarding the decision of Fiba Secretary General Patrick Baumann.

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Ralph M. Bravo, College Student
XTRA

Jihad militants dare Abbas to stop their suicide plots

By Hind Farsakh

Brick dares challenge to Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, who has repeatedly ordered and to Resist their weapons. Armed militant Hamas gunmen boldly walk near Gaza City's central square Aug. 20, announcing they won't halt attacks despite Israel's withdrawal from Gaza. AFP

Brunei's sultan marries Malaysian ex-newscaster

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OPINION

The fugitive

EDITORIAL

STRICTLY speaking, administration stalwart Rep. Prospero Pichay called it right. "[Former election commissioner] Garcillano is not a fugitive from justice. The Constitution guarantees his right to travel," the congressman said on Friday.

If the reports are accurate, the controversial election official left the country through Singapore more than a month ago, on July 14. Strictly speaking, there was no legal impediment to prevent him from boarding the plane: He had not yet been ordered arrested by the House of Representatives; he was not the subject of a hold-departure order; he faced neither prosecution nor conviction before a court.

It is that last condition that the Department of Foreign Affairs, under heavy criticism for its perceived role in Garcillano's "escape," now finds itself giving emphasis to.

"The DFA or the DOJ (the Department of Justice) is NOT the proper forum to determine whether Garcillano is a fugitive from justice or not. That function belongs to the Philippine Courts," a note at the top of the department's website explained. (Emphasis in the original.)

The note also quoted from a year-old DOJ opinion based on two Supreme Court decisions. The label of "fugitive from justice" applies "not only (to) those who flee after conviction to avoid punishment but likewise to those who, after being charged, flee to avoid prosecution."

Strictly speaking, Garcillano does not fit into these categories, not now, and not when he left for Singapore. But the Arroyo administration would be in serious error if it thinks that the matter can be left at that.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a leader of the political opposition and a former chief of the Philippine National Police, has insisted that the controversial election official could not have left the country's borders without the help of connects in the Bureau of Immigration. "My suspicion is that it is the government which allowed Gusi to leave," Lacson said. Even someone leaving through the so-called back door would need "exit stamps" from a BI minion, for instance. "Who has the capacity to do that? Only the government or the administration," Lacson said.

Strictly speaking, one does not need to conspire with the entire government to be able to leave the country undetected: one needs to conspire only with officials in the right places. Many fugitives have done exactly that, including former top police officers known to Lacson himself.

But this is cold comfort for the administration. In the public view, the flight of Garcillano was obviously conducted in secrecy; therefore, it was a conspiracy of the entire government.

It is important to note that, since the Hello Garci scandal broke out on June 6, Garcillano broke his silence only once: He spoke by telephone with an Inquirer reporter, from an undisclosed location, in an arrangement facilitated by Pichay, and then mainly to say that during the campaign and the recent last year he talked with other candidates as well.

Other than that, his silence on the main allegation against him and the President has been eye-splitting.

The administration may wish to turn down the decibel level, but the only ways to do that is to find Garcillano. If it had acted earlier, to meet the opposition's demand that Garcillano face the five-gunned hearing in Congress on the alleged wiretapping, a strenuous effort to locate Garcillano may have sufficed to mute public suspicion. Now it is too late. Nothing less than finding the controversial election expert himself will allay public doubt about Garcillano's flight.

For the President's defenders, that is the crux of the matter: Garcillano's flight looks like an admission of the President's guilt. If for that reason alone, the administration must let Garcillano surface.

The President's crisis is essentially one of legitimacy. The best venue for presenting the strongest evidence against the President, and for the President to present her strongest defense, is through the impeachment process. But if Garcillano remains missing from the equation, the numbers will never add up. If Garcillano never appears as a witness, the legitimacy issue will remain. If Garcillano remains inaccessible for inexplicable reasons, the crisis will fester, regardless of the administration's silliest impeachment-case maneuvers.

In the public view, Garcillano is already a fugitive—if not from justice, then from the truth.

Solon wants to tax drinking water

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

PEOPLE are talking about "The Great Raid" and "The Great Escape." See the new movie with Gene Hackman in it—just at the old one starring Steve McQueen. They are talking about the raid sanctioned by police and military intelligence against a house in Mandaluyong. Not Sen. Biazi, where that unjust imposition on Americans choosing to be law-abiding citizens and the escape of former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano (who is said to have been caught in the "Hello Garci" tapes as one of the prominent personalities involved in a plot to cheat in the elections).

The operation—a fine turn apart—the raid and the escape—could not have been successfully accomplished without the knowledge, approval and help of Malacañang. The inquirer (here, after all, would be the one to know) learns from the author of evidence on graft cheating and from the escape of Garci.

The Criminal Investigation and Detection Group of the police (CIDG) and the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) would have objected if Garcillano and Garci said it is bad not been ordered by somebody with high up in the government. There was no search warrant, no complaint against the occupant of the house, no entry SR. The police should certainly have done something. Their caretaker, Inquirer Talampoying, an expert on questioned documents, has not committed any crime.

The excuse given by the CIDG and Isafp for the raid was that the owner of the house asked for their help. If that was the only reason, wouldn't the local police have been enough? Why was the CIDG involved? And the Isafp, too? Really, some unhelpful but very powerful could have ordered the raid.

Similarly, Garcillano could not have escaped without the help, financial and otherwise, of Malacañang. He could not have obtained a visa for the theater of the Empire to Singapore. And he could not have gotten through immigration without the help of somebody very influential. Gusi have opened the light doors for him and greased the right hands.

Everybody now is looking for Garci. There was an alert for him. There had been talk he spent some time due to would escape to another country. Yet, he was still able to escape. He could not have done that, see unless some government officials were incompetent or were part of a conspiracy.

The conspiracy theory that Malacañang is getting to desperate so as to resort to illegal acts is already being bandied about. Without any evidence, rational evidence and non-flimsy fruit-of-the-poisonous-tree evidence, the issue would be settled by the court of public opinion.

The competent election returns, although never made as evidence in the election protests of former Sen. Lanee Legarda against Vice President Noli de Castro, would also show that the votes for the presidential candidates were altered or manipulated to make GMA win. And Garcillano, if found and forced to tell the truth, could mean the end of the GMA regime. Meanwhile, Malacañang are making criminal prosecution to some Mindanao's results. In fact, Biazi might being abandoned because of what he knows. He knows too much. But dead men tell no tales.

The lessons have once more is that Marcoses will always win. "You can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you can't fool all of the people all the time." The more you lie and commit illegal acts to cover your tracks, the more you are caught in the web of your lies. Like Jim Cruz in "Empire of the Sun," try to wiggle out of them by lying some more, the more the noose tightens. Even supernatural and habitual lies are caught. GMA is no exception. The most powerful man in the world, President Richard Nixon, crying as never seen the newspaper burglary, was finally caught in the web of his lies that were supposed to be secret tapes of his conversations in the White House. GMA was caught by secret tapes of her phone conversations with Garci. Stand resigned the presidency unless their lies an impeachment conviction. Would that GMA be as accountable as Nixon and do the same thing.—*reaga*

* * *

As if the evaporated realize added tax is not enough to squeeze the life out of the people, congressman Pichay wants a million tax—would you believe—drinking water. Sec. House Bill 2899 of Samar Rep. Catalino Figueroa Lukao (4th) proposes to impose a 10-per-cents excise tax on bottled water. The excise tax would be in addition to the EVAT. And the House says and means committee, instead of cheering the stupid bill into the senate chamber, has actually entered hearings on the bill.

Drinking water in a basic necessity. Nobody can continue to live without safe drinking water in a country where more than one-third of the population has no access to safe drinking water. It is criminal to tax it. Excise communities have fallen ill from drinking contaminated tap water. So the rich substitute bottled water for tap water. Figueroa said clean bottled water free because it is safer. That is to contend to Mr. Mr. Jet stamo on put it beyond the reach of the people by imposing an additional tax on it. All for what? So the government will have more money that government officials can steal and use to bribe witnesses and legislators. Perhaps, Figueroa was thinking of the pork barrel of congressmen when he filed the bill.

Its excise tax is imposed to curb the consumption of products harmful to health, such as alcohol and tobacco. By slapping such tax on drinking water, is Figueroa saying that drinking water is cause for sickness or cancer? A tax on drinking water, handed or use, is a usurpation of people's rights to life.

Seasons

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

SOMEONE told me some time ago, he was fed up with politics he had stopped reading it. He was not without a sense of outrage over what was happening to the country but he was tilted as well by politics as being dominated by unsavory characters, thefts, he said, weren't making things better. They were feeding on political scandal the way sharks feed on blood, churning out idiotic observations rather than analyses actually. Such was his theme, or thesis, he ignored the latest struggles, preferring to read or watch other things on TV.

I can see completely sympathetic to him. I do feel that way too, time and then, being irritated by politics, being devastated by news about politicians I once held in high regard, the stories of politicians, particularly the GMA, the PNP, the JDV and the horde of members that surrounding as congressmen. One imagines that the air, the liberal one and the one occupied by the anti and pro-GMA forces, could have been eaten clear now. Silence is preferable to gibberish.

I find the need to look for a breather too, and I proudly intend to when I am listening to five minute while thinking my favorite games, and someone from my wife tries to rattle and bother us talking about politics. Being politics. I do one tell him or bugger off. I do not want to risk an attack of gout just to listen to him. I prefer sweet music and witty sweeter musicians. But I realize that I cannot completely divorce myself from politics. Unfortunately, the more luxurious political animals have an instinct to direct me, for that to another one).

I am not completely unsympathetic to my friend's plight, his mother am I completely sympathetic to his woes. Until now, the politics represented by crimes, some of them profoundly sick much disdain dark some distance for politics. "I know nothing about politics," some even say with pride. Never have I seen ignorance celebrated with such arrogance. What can I say? That's the kind of indifference that allows tyranny to thrive. That's the kind of intellectual bias allows GMA to prosper.

Who wants to have to talk or watch politics if

their cats help it? Who wants to listen to the reading of the bureau on TV when they can watch Solar Sports instead? Who wants to get into arguments with people like Ronaldo Puno and Raul Gonzalez (who should be demoted) they have not been hit by thunderbolts by now (I say the words "raw" and "mistakes") when they can have more pleasant conversations with friends, real or imagined, and lovers, legitimate or illegitimate? Indeed, who wants to suffer the frustrations, or even danger, of having to insert the lone sane smell of country bodies to protest the usurpation of Malacañang by an illegitimate President when they can have the luxury of that of an undiluted scent, drowning themselves in the heat and smell of a sweaty body while saying, "Ang sarap ng amoy ng pawis"?

I do not resent or ill use or be cute help it. But that is exactly the problem. Neither you nor I can help it.

I can't help it. Bite off, because I am a junkie. I can't help it because as a parent I am compelled by a force more powerful than the Constitution, which is the power of instinct, the instinct even of animals to protect their young, to give my kids a better world, or one at least that will not piss upon them. I do not want them to go through the same ordeal my generation did just to be able to live this country from a coup.

I still remember what my mother used to tell me each time I told her not to worry when I wrote some satire unfavorably on Ferdie Marcos and books in hand and did not come home for a day or so. The true chastity before martial law, when I would spend the night in circulation places. Of course, she had to worry, she said, she was a parent. Wait till I become a parent, she said.

In my case, it was a little easier because my father was already dead. He died way back when I was in an internal year high school, and I was helping put bread on our table by writing for a national magazine in my last year in college. I could always sustain my disappointment in my mother after a story my Parent had to her friends would be about another scandal involving their beloved abandoned. Sisters were told to rule themselves permanently, which, of course, was never meant; some were even tempted by the parents to the nothingness, like rising soldiers to be "rehabbed."

I can't understand why ring in my eyes today like in '05, or but no long ago before. If you're a parent, you would know what a beauty for your 18-year old to run for home or 10 p.m. on a weekday in those perilous times. One is tempted to say that it is the work of God's evil phones. But if you're a parent, you would also know that, for a reason that is not always explainable by adult industries, your kid's cell phone always seems to develop low bars or loses ungodly hours, which makes him incommunicado for long stretches. Once, your parents managed to cope with that state of worry at the time. I know I'll probably get a heart attack if I had to worry every time about my kid inhabiting a place that could be ruled terrorists.

I was an activist then, but I seriously doubt that many activists then would want their kids now to live in the same dangerous city did. Particularly those who were underground or on the hills, and more particularly those who were married and conceived, who now have kids of their own or in the battlefield with half their faces blown off. You fight in your time so one's a measure of peace for the next generation's. I fight when it's the time so such a measure of peace for my kids.

We do our part so the next one need not kids will have to do it for us. I do not stop that more or less and my kids will have to do it for me.

(To be concluded)

Betrayal of public trust

THERE is a basic road going on as to which impeachment complaint the Commission on Justice should take up.

The line of defense being put up by the President's lawyers is that only Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo would be a different lawyer and not detail complaints prohibited by the Constitution. The Commission says that only one impeachment proceeding against a respondent may be initiated and within one year. In other words, the President's lawyers square "complaint" with "proceeding."

Let us look at the main pillar of Arroyo's complaint: that there is no "betrayal of public trust."

The complaint for betrayal of public trust is the phone call made to an official of the Commission on Elections, a phone call which the President has admitted with public display of some embarrassment, but which she maintained "lapse in judgment." And since several phone calls were involved, she as much as admitted multiple lapses in judgment. But is that all that betrayal of public trust means? Is it limited to one example, or can it be expanded to several other cases? The President's lawyers seem to be saying that Lozano, having given one example, may not give more. Such a notion is worse than just a lapse in judgment; it is a deliberate attempt to limit the witnesses to misbehaving public officers. We concur with previous votes, however, the 1986 Constitutional Commission added "betrayal of public trust" as another ground for impeachment. Evidently they wanted to make the witnesses even tighter. What did the 48

Sounding Board

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

commissioners want?

Commissioner Ricardo Romulo, in response to a query from Commissioner (now Supreme Court Justice) Florenz Regalado, said that the phrase "betrayal of public trust" was meant to be a catch all phrase to cover any manner of the acts set out here. Commissioner Bacas is in her favor, who was responsible for the insertion of the naive vigilante provision, said that a reference to oil acts, even if not committed by means of penal offenses, which render the officer unfit to continue in office. He mentioned "inexcusable negligence of duty, financial abuse of power, breach of official duty by malfeasance or misfeasance, cronyism, favoritism, etc." In the principle of ejusdem generis and associated to bring the office into disrepute."

To which Romulo added "interaction of points." Expressly excluded, however, were "purely ministerial duties." Also excluded from Concepcion's definition of "betrayal of public trust"—perhaps, in the belief that these are understandable under others.

Significantly, Commissioner Blas Ople, who had sought to add "manifest and gross disregard of the people's will" as another ground, was among his antecedents after the Commission explained that such addition would in fact narrow the grounds for impeachment by requiring that the betrayal be gross. Moreover, Commissioner Edmund Chief Justice Roberto Concepcion continued that additional particularization would have the effect of weakening the provision under the guise of explanation, even on matters obvious.

To further understand the import of "betrayal of public trust" as a serious signature, it is important to compare it to how the 1986 constitutions set aforesaid "culpable violation of the Constitution." The accepted view in the Commission was that "culpable violation of the Constitution" implied "deliberate intent, perhaps even more than gross negligence, or the mere exercise of power in the belief that the law permits the action when in fact it does not." The president officials would go so far as to defy knowingly what the Constitution commands," illustrated, as Commissioner and now Chief Justice Reynato Puno explained, "a clear case of public crime," as already explained, required much less than culpable violation of the Constitution and, in effect, already included everything in the other impeachable offenses "betrayal of public trust."

Starting with the broad meaning of "betrayal of public trust," we must look at what the Constitution prohibits, it prohibits the betrayal of those duties one "responsibilities pertaining." It does not necessarily prohibit specific violations of prohibitions. More than one complaint would be prohibited only if the multiple complaints would require more than "one prosecuting." But if they can be logically and consistently combined into one impeachment, there would be no violation of the Constitution.

In the current controversy, the so-called "amended complaint" and the Lopez complaint, which Speaker Jose de Venecia says he will not endorse, Congress together with the Lozano complaints, are nothing more than "bills of particulars" to accompany the Lozano complaints. They both elaborate on the same constitutional offense of "betrayal of public trust." The constitutional purpose, therefore, what is being initiated is only "one case."

Anything involving one complaint but with an extended bill of particulars.

One last observation. However, why the President's defenders resist the way they do. They must realize that if the "bill of particulars" is referred to the Senate, the President will be tested and burdened and he stands to acquit. I guess we must bestow the considerable doubt the presidential defenders and elect to doubt their intelligence.

Davao's harvests

Kris-Crossing Mindanao

Carlos Isagani T. Zarate

DESPITE THE not-so-smart politics of a telecom giant from major sponsorship, last week's Kris-Aquatown Festival in Davao City still proved to be successful or "tongatinos," as the host organizer Mayor Rodrigo Duterte would call it. Dubbed as the "festival of festivals" in Mindanao, the week-long event, capped by a colorful float from parade yesterday showcased not only the city's beautiful harbors of Davao and Illinois, but also the rich culture and traditions of Mindanao's peoples—the Lumad, Moros and Christians.

Notwithstanding the security concerns raised by some quarters, the city teemed with local and foreign tourists who were trying to savor the many delectable fruits only the "City of Durian" offers. Aside from the sounds of gongs, bullroarer and other indigenous musical instruments and the scents of fresh flowers that wafted along and the streets, the festival also showcased the world-renowned Davao fruits, especially the durian, locally known as the "king of fruits" and the "queen of fruits."

The durian fiber-made products were launched early Aug. 18 by the Kadayawan during a Talaandigan rigs from southeastern ng Kasanggay—Bukidnon of Western for the technology-based opportunities for the entrepreneurs and development. Aquatic is an NGO that focuses on the promotion of "sustainable agriculture through integrated systems of organic agriculture, of production and use of technology among subsistence farmers" in the Davao region.

"Mamamag libre ang durian, ang dang-manila kasi ang—ang rogon mga 20 pesos lang ang ma-earn sa libre da durian, mga 75 pesos," Norgalyn Alcantara, 18, a Grade 12 student from Talaingod, said, pointing out that such is foreseen at Summit Durian. She said that fiber-extracted from durian can be stored for a longer time compared to those from other indigenous materials. Also, giving women talented fiber-weaving skills, she added, will help them earn an additional and cheaper per kilogram source of raw materials.

Kasakan' producer, although still in small quantity, are now exported to other countries.

So, for durian lovers, the next time you eat durian, don't just throw its husks away. Think of them as another source of fiber.

* * *

Multi-awarded filmmaker Dr. Marcelito Tiu and jiwe Brat Bagasin, both literature professors of the Ateneo de Davao University, once again bagged the country's most coveted awards in literature: the Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards. Tiu's "Balyan," a tale about a tuntal shaman, won first prize in the Urbanna short story category. Pagsanjan "Mga Ina ng Pinagpala," a story about an FQE-student, won first prize in the Filipino category. "Bangka sa Kalaliko," which won the title of Bicol's workers in the regional March and also won's Ms. Bagasin, was second prize in the Cebuano short story category.

* * *

Comments to Kar_Isani@yahoo.com or karlos_z23@hotmail.com

1983 and 2005

The Long View

Manuel L. Quezon III

IN 1983, on the anniversary of the Plaza Miranda bombing, Ninoy Aquino came home. The man who was headed down the side stairs of the airplane was greeted by Gen. Fabian Ver, who had shocked years must be different from the dissident aspect of 1983.

He was a man justified of any suspicion of self-interested action, a person patriot. He had returned to the country to face his fate, to set right with the dictatorship and hopefully usher a return to pop. Marcos would be under of reconciliation with a nation. Ninoy than likewise said it did not matter if he was killed as he returned.

In the presence of 3,000 soldiers sent to meet the exiled senator, honor was taken down by three Philippine Constabulary officers; and before his feet touched the tarmac, he was shot in the head. Three hours later, the nation was stunned, first incredulous and then into rage.

It was the first visual sizing of the wounds by the people who lined up to view Ninoy's remains, as he lay in state at Times Street, and when followed by his body to the mausoleum, it was apparent that 1983 would be a real season for the literature.

A few days after Ninoy's death, opposition-minded Senator Jose Diokno, Senator Jose Aquino, Senator Joe Ali and others formed the Kilusang Bayan.

They demand the immediate resignation of President Marcos, the entire Cabinet, the Executive Committee, members of the Batasang Pambansa, and top generals of the military; a provisional government; free elections supervised by both and withdrawal of martial law. The opposition was determined to bring the country to a standstill.

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the other was a solid band of opposition to the one-person dictatorship.

Martial authority resulted in his old stick of fit rule and rule, but the more he sought to divide, the more convinced the opposition became that he was weakening and could not rule.

Writing after four, Sen. Serena Diokno summed up the mood of the time: "Ninoy's martyrdom and struggle—of courage in opposition to the Marcos regime, in parliamentary opposition, and his abuse of the Filipino people, of differences within a movement united by the common cause of political understanding, in unity only that had for promised political ambitions, and of unrelenting struggle against a dictatorship pressed up by the governments of the United States."

Indeed, the opposition began to get over their one interest in dealing with rulers. But the Church was firmly in place in the bandstand. Jaime Cardinal Sin directed the operations from the rear, but it was Archbishop Teopisto Alberto, whom he honored the martyr with the honors befitting a head of state.

In the future, the opposition seems to have been a continuous shuffle, along city streets lined with people who, in the words of Ninoy's widow Cory, confirm, to the rules of an urban drama and the mailing of public notice, in reality it was a series of skirmishes and covers, of maladjusting advance and parallel movements converging.

It's defining events were summed up by Diokno as, "the early conflict between the Church's call for national reconciliation and the people's demand for the removal of Marcos, the agonizing period of deciding whether or not to take part in the parliamentary [farcical] elections in May 1984, the failed Bayan congress... in May 1985, and the founding of the BANDILA..." Through it all, the unfolding drama appeared to be about confidence without rage, but also without any harmful effects. The movement was unstoppable, even for the purchase of some of those who constituted it.

It reminded an effects looked from before was the last hours, however, of a man who had begun campaigning against corrupt businessmen and beyond campaigns against crony businessmen, and the use of unifying symbols and slogans with the entire political movement constituted to quarrel among themselves over any issue and all issues.

They quarreled about the ideal form of transitional government and its legal details, about the need or futility of including the US bases in its aims, and about the constructing of political processes, and about the constructing of political processes. Cardinal Sin proposed, on Sept. 25, 1983, an eight-member tribunal-council composed of four representatives from within and outside the opposition. This was the opposing advice of the Church's efforts to move the incredible forces of change into peaceful and orderly channels.

On Jan. 7 and 8, 1985, the Congress of the Philippines People (Kompil) was held, in an attempt to unify the opposition groups. It was supposed to be moderates, and attempted to answer the question about the "Marcos Bridge" movements go on, and, if success ever did, who should be its nominal head. Kompil was the grandfather of BAN-DILA, and Kompil had decided that the time for involvement had arrive primarily because the design the Left designed has struck the moderates valued—to die, because the safety of property—were in danger. Kompil was a success—every of politics, and values were a completely, to ensure everything in the way it was, and put politics and power again in its natural democratic place.

Where is today's Kompil? Or can such an assembly be repeated today? That is the question that it's well to remember that opinion was a genuine search to the contested field, as it is today. Then the leaders on both sides were as tumultuous society seem to be today.

'It's the economy, stupid'

A GOOD that many seem to be. Because than the weaknesses of the charges against President Macapagal-Arroyo, it's one matter to cite specific why the United Republic crowds—despite all the sophisticated and well-funded plans and propaganda it has made against her—can't prod a People Power revolt.

The necessary is important in understanding our pass two failure. Because of

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Commentary

Rigoberto D. Tiglao

On the other hand, Erap's drinking and nodding sprees kept him away from decisively leading the economy out of the Asian crisis financial crisis that started in 1997. The political crises that broke out under Marcos and Estrada, because of entirely non-economic reasons—the Ninoy assassination in 1983 and Chavit Singson's exposé in 2000—sent further weakened the troubled economies of each period. There, in turn, deepened the political crisis that overthrew them, resulting in their ouster.

In contrast, despite the plots against the President since 2001, the economy in the past four years under her has become stronger.

Take a look at the figures: the rate of economic growth, measured by the growth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and inflation rates, in percentages:

President	Average GDP Growth Rate (%)	Average Inflation Rate (%)
Aquino	3.8	10.4
Ramos	4.7	7.5
Estrada	2.8	8.0
Arroyo	4.6	5.3

The economy registered its highest growth under Arroyo's presidency compared to the preceding three administrations; inflation, the lowest. There is an unmistakable economic momentum, growing only 1.2 percent in the first quarter of 2001 when she assumed office, the GDP growth rate has accelerated to 4.4 percent in the first and second quarters of 2005, which is the highest in the last six years.

Jobs generated annually, measured by year-on-year increases in the number of employed persons, have seen the biggest number under Arroyo:

President	Jobs during term (No. of jobs)	Average per year (000)
Aquino (6)	4,000	666
Ramos (6)	5,713	952
Estrada (2.5)	1,000	400
Arroyo (5.5)	3,843	1,014

The economic growth under Mrs Arroyo has helped the poorest. Poverty incidence has gone down, from 27.5 percent in 2000 to 24.7 percent in 2003. This means 1 million Filipinos getting out of the poverty quagmire in just three years. Wealth distribution has also improved, as shown in the percentage changes in the shares of the different economic groups in the national income. Under Arroyo's watch, the percentage share of the richest 10% decile has declined by 1.3 percent, with the nearly corresponding increases in the share of the poorest deciles.

But it's not that the rich are being terribly impoverished under Arroyo's watch. It's that the rich are the market's preferential beneficiaries, compared to those of others in the region. We're the third less profitable this year in corporate, massive stock manipulations involving the SSS and other asset funds occurred in 2000, triggering most stock-listed of the booms.

Country	2004 Price index	2005 May Price index	Growth (%)
Indonesia	1,000	1,000	0.0
Korea	939	970	6.3
HK	1,833	1,858	3.9
Singapore	2,000	2,101	5.1
Malaysia	987	887	-6.1
PH	14,030	13,681	-2.8

The two economic crises that most immediately impacted domestic—the exchange and interest rates—behaved differently during Erap's and now Gloria's troubled months.

• During Erap's crisis that started mid 2000, the peso's exchange rate fell from P43 to the dollar to P56, a huge PA-loss in our currency's value, heralding a chaotic period economic crisis was ended. The exchange rate is now back to just less than 55AD in contrast, since the currency turmoil started in 1997, the peso's exchange rate has held steady in the P54-level. Thus, despite the fact that crude oil prices have trended up to their highest levels in 20 years, paying tremendous pressure on the peso's value.

• Interest rates, represented by the 91 day Treasury bill rates, remained high at the 10-percent levels in the decline before Estrada's fall. In contrast, this year, T-bill rates have even softened, from 7.7 percent at the start of the year to the latest 5.8 percent.

And the economic results?

Business firms are expressing that the political storm will be ending soon.

A Bangko Sentral poll of 870 firms—that's more than double the 350 respondents in Pulse Asia's surveys—showed that businessmen are forecasting a better macroeconomic in the fourth quarter, with the outlook index for that period increased to 18.3 percent. This is a reversal of the negative (i.e., pessimistic) 2.8-percent index for the third quarter of the year. (This newspaper's blog, 10 article on this poll put it all wrong, with its headline: "BSP survey shows business confidence").

It's the economy under Gloria which is helping thwart off the Bagtal plots.

Rigoberto Tiglao is the head of the Presidential Management Staff. He was a Philippine correspondent before he joined government in 2001. The views in this column are his own and should not be construed as official views of the Office of the President.—Ed.

They Said

Dark noon

"How can we endure our countryside living that way? It was more time but I thought it was midnight. We'll never see daylight in that cubicle."

—Manila Archbishop Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales, recalling the night of 9 prior literally the case sitting Bishop Antolin Cardinal Oscoy with Archbishop Rosales

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Eradication of 'jueteng' must start with Church

LETTERS

I JUSTBLAT agree with the views of the new archbishop of Manila. The moral values of the Filipino people have changed. The majority has accepted that to mitigate out of the "hard life," it is okay for a person to be corrupt and to tolerate wrongs visible in public service as for that matter, in any activity that he is involved.

Perhaps, it is high time the Church ministered to the spiritual needs of the Filipino people instead of trying to fix the political situation by becoming politicians themselves.

As far as justice is concerned, perhaps, the Church could start by opposing monstrosities coming from people known to be jueteng operators. It is ridiculous knowledge that almost all town financiers in the Philippines are bankrolled by money from jueteng. That is how deep this evil, sinister jueteng has become entrenched, so that it is no longer an easy matter to eradicate, but it has to start somewhere and that "somewhere" is the Church.

—JOAQUIN CHAMS,
9811 Sycamore Ave.,
Fontana, Ca 92335, USA

Media exaggerate the negative, downplay the positive

I APPRECIATE the observation of Selina Ireland on mass media's role in the pursuit of truth (PDI, 7/23/05). The media exaggerate the negative but fall short in projecting the positive. There is obvious bias against the government, especially the President. The media should not shy away from outrage and mistakes of the government rather than appreciate what it has been doing and has done for the people. The media preside over the daily trial of the President by publicity and have assumed the role of jury and executioner.

I believe that a great majority of our people want peace and stability and economic progress under the present government, more than the uncertainties that multi-color anti-Arroyo protesters want.

If EDSA people, rainbow coalition groups and rush in to fill the vacuum and will not allow the constitutional succession to sit as president. If Noli de Castro goes as she is constitutionally supposed to work for his resignation and will not stop until he succeeds. For the opposition, it will be much easier to prey on De Castro.

My impression is that the media do not care much about the nation's interest. They would readily mount any of the opposition's pronouncements even just for sensationalism. Many times in the past, the mass media broadcast reports and rallies like they are protests' false accusations. But news readers and TV viewers found out later that only a small crowd came, and most of them were the same group of paid "people power" here to chant at Malacañang.

For the media, national interest is not their important anymore. It's the ratings game. I appeal to the responsible sectors of mass media to exercise more restraint for the people. We have suffered too much already.

—CIRY LUNDQUIST,
ndy_lundquist@yahoo.com

Obstructionists in justice dep't

REQUIEM readers wondered whatever happened to the $2.1 million bribery complaint versus Fernando Perez, which was filed in 2001.

The requiem's follow-up article in its July 30, 2005 issue showed that the ombudsman's office had indicted public servants and compelled to handle by-must-case basis!

Predictably, former acting justice Secretary Merceditas Gutierrez offered plausible, perhaps logical, excuses—lack of witnesses, inability—but her tenure she must-case.

Incumbent Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez did his share—a shameful array of personal plugs and media-driven delicacy maneuvers [such as "he's not as we can see"]—including the tar-fly-in-spoons to the Ombudsman's sponsors.

These excuses from our hopeless clean-cop legal executive may not even be legal, much less plausible, and worst of all, trivial.

While interventions such as these governments officials, who needs enemies of this sort?

—ALFREDO S. ADUCSON,
93 Castello St.,
Barangay Ugong Norte, QC

Nothing said of GMA getting P500 million

TO fill in the vacation in the headline "Zapanta says Garci said GMA got P500M" (PDI, 8/11/05).

I listened intently to the testimony of Capt. Marlon Abenione and to the questions and comments of the senators, so I know what he said so each thing! What he said was that he heard Garcillano say that "Bong Pineda already gave P500 million to support President Macapagal-Arroyo's candidacy in the election." I'm sure the Ombudsman, or the officials that he should investigate during hearings, will have the same.

In other words, the identity of the recipient was not mentioned by the captain. The money could have been given to GMA's party or campaign machinery or to Garcillano himself and other Comelec officials.

The above headline, which was apparently biased or malicious, must have misled some readers who saw it but were unable to read the whole story.

—MIGUEL HORNEDO

THE INTENT of the banner headline was to indicate that Capt. Marlon Abenione's testimony about the P500 million was hearsay.—Ed.

Inability to be honest a national weakness

DOES current political crisis is the consequence of our inability or unwillingness to be honest with ourselves: seeing things the way we want them to be is our weakness. Our President has been following to be true from honest, but we cannot die in party and an economics degree holder, we seize so many clever excuses for keeping her in place.

Also, we have excuses that gives us heartaches and sleepless nights, but they seem more confused than enlightened about their role as protectors of national integrity. In fact, they seem unable or unwilling to accept the fact that the role — to protect our interests — has been leaving us all because of complete incompetence. If they can't recognize the signs that indicate they must start taking remedial measures before things get out of hand, how can they be effective as "protectors"? Will they move only after the damage has been done?

The enforcers say they are apolitical, but our nation does not serve the purpose for which they were put in place. Instead, they continue allowing the problems to linger because of short-term gains. A man once said that we are merely playing blind in the political discussion. In which case, the people will be within their rights to do something to protect themselves from incumbent and potential leaders. That means "people power," if it does happen again, cannot be called "illegal or "unconstitutional." So one, least of all the deserted leaders, can've drawn the collective will of the people.

The excuse to "unite as we can never us" is certainly a clever attempt to evade the issue. Worse, that the President has been moving with reckless abandon in the direction of buying loyalties is an act that insults the people. It isn't just immoral; it also must be corrected as soon as possible — when the current leadership is replaced.

If a series of protests crop up of leaders to see reason enough to recognize that dictatorship is often begun by from progressing. The survey results have said that a large majority of the people no longer trust our President. But she never seems to realize it. Instead, she repeatedly unpresentable personalities, exposing her conscience to ridicule/sting. Perhaps, we are not aware that we have been supporting the turmoil of today? Perhaps, we have leaders who are afraid of the truth?

—HERBERT R. BAUTISTA,
rmwmanagement@yahoo.com

Words can't refute what the eyes see

NOTHING can't ease grandiose pronouncements made by an unpopular one that things are finally starting to catch ahead in the Philippines — socially, politically or economically... I could not quite say "hooray" for the latest Social Weather survey the human activity unfolding in the weekly makeshift market is more informative.

The same kids are running around, malnourished and out of school. The same jobless (goodbye?) sitting and slouching around with nary a care in all more months sold. The same drug pushers and addicts up to their usual tricks. The same women hawking babies and struggling to raise them properly. The same men drinking away their low precious pesos. The same "hoodlums" offering their services for hire. The same guys standing across roads, stealing electricity. The same men pushing wooden tricycles filled with recyclable scrap.

And there are the same roadside stench of rotting garbage and the same decaying pigs wading knee-deep of water; the same rats emerges to be a Western style singer or dancer.

I've been living in the middle of a squatter community in Quezon City since December 2003. So, I'm not a white missionary or an aid worker or an American. Just a foreign 'OF' one. I see things happening around me that others may not. Perhaps, they don't — to the mere indicator of any cat-man's "getting ahead." Until your so-called intellectuals systematically solve the gross inequalities and injustices of human poverty, all your concerns boil down to chaff... all your flashy rebrowsing, all your media bumph, analysis and "macroeconomic-ing," all your pounding politicians and actors to add up to 0(00)% equal. Filipinos are being subjected to the mass petulance of propaganda, all of which is 100 percent unsubstantiated bulls—t.

I don't believe the claims of this or that general, politician, professor, actor, priest or businessperson as the final word. I believe more what I see. And what I see is merely ugly. It's how much cost. Or inspiration your statement for yourself. Or just consider a different ...

—AMY WILLIAMS,
andyk@yahoo.com.au

RP-SMB five bows to Japan; Aces also fall

BEIJING (Xinhuanet)—Japan's Toshi Inc Bears Thursday gave the RP-San Miguel Beer a stalk-welcome with an 89-80 defeat of the Filipinos in the 5th Shell Friendship Cup basketball night at the Nationwid Indoor Stadium.

The Japanese scored a scorching three-point shooting in Seniors minute in the third period and turned on to draw entire Nihon Sun and import Frederick Lewis in the tournament to pull off the reunion in the same manner of the opening bill.

Meanwhile, the 5th Knights of South Korea took the lead in the final contest, six-team tournament by nipping Armenia "Tae" Bet Jang and the Manila Aces, 95-93, thanks for Jang's second straight victory.

The Koreans, reinforced by former Shell import Wesley Wilson, defeated Australia by blasting China's Shandong Lions, 87-82.

It was a tough last for the Nationals, who led by 13 points at 59-50 going into the final quarter with Filipino shifting star of his reserve replica in the third period.

Yeddie unleashed a stunning 22-4 blast at the start of the payoff period with Jose and Vidal Ordinez doing most of the damage to retake the lead at 78-73, with 6:13 left.

JAMES YEARS
[illegible]
1 p.m.—vs
tonight: evidence
3 p.m.—Globe
evidence
10 p.m.—Globe
doing at 897-1888

The Aces had a chance to steal their game with the Koreans in overtime but Stephen Bullock's two treasures lost at time-expired.

The scores:

TOSHIBA-JAPAN (89)—Ano 31, Oki 11, Lane 11, Nakahashi 9, Nihon 9, Sakai 5, Mizunaga 5, Ishikawa 5.

SP-SAN MI. (80)—Dizon 15, Jiang 13, Ordinario 10, Salud 9, Chu 7, Ko 5, Kimura 5, Ishizaki 5, Kitano 2, Ishino 2, Ishizaki 2, Suzuki 2.

Quarter: 21-16, 47-41, 70-64, 89-80.

SUNGKYUNKWAN (87)—Hilton 29, Kim 17, Ye 15, Lee 10, Lee 9, Kim 5, Kim 2.

ALASKA (78)—Hayes 25, Aquino 13, Cone 12, Yeddie 10, Tenorio 9, Medina 5, Castro 3, Alvarez 2, Pinto 2.

Quarter: 21-20, 43-34, 66-62, 87-78.

Cabading: Bigger tragedy discovered

KIDAPAWAN City—In a heartbreaking twist, fate dealt another blow to Cabading's family.

Pag-asa Yu Foundation (PYF) Chairman Jose Concepcion Jr. announced that the foundation would cover the medical expenses of Cabading's daughter, Rosalie, who was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer.

Rosalie, 12, was found to have a tumor in her brain during a routine check-up. She underwent surgery last week and is now recovering well.

Concepcion said the foundation would also provide financial assistance to the family to help them cope with the medical bills.

Cabading's wife, Maria, said she was overwhelmed by the generosity of the foundation. "We don't know how to thank them enough. We are just grateful that our daughter is getting the best care possible," she said.

The family has been struggling to make ends meet since Cabading lost his job as a construction worker. They have been relying on the kindness of neighbors and friends to help them with their daily needs.

Concepcion said the foundation would also help the family find a new source of income. "We want to make sure that they are not just dependent on us, but that they can stand on their own feet," he said.

Cabading's family is now hopeful that Rosalie will make a full recovery. They are also grateful for the support they have received from the community.

OPENS AUGUST 24 A SPINE-CHILLING EXPERIENCE WITH THE SUPERNATURAL.
PERSONS WITH WEAK HEARTS ARE ADVISED NOT TO SEE THIS FILM ALONE

THE PHILIPPINES' Dado Peña (right) shares the podium with winner John O'Hara of Ireland (center) and runner-up Jonny Winslow of Britain.

Peña winds up 3rd as tough luck hounds Sy

By Roy Luarca

BOGOR, Indonesia—Raul Isch struck Team Sy some Sunday, leaving fellow Filipino Dado Peña to carry the fight for the Philippines in Round Seven of the Asian Formula 3 Grand Prix at the Sentul International Circuit here.

Sy, the top qualifier overnight, stalled on the grid due to an overheated clutch but still landed fourth behind Peña in the race punctuated by the 1-2 finish of Ford Fiesta ECO drivers John O'Hara of Ireland and Jonny Winslow of Great Britain.

O'Hara, which overtook Winslow in the seventh lap, clocked 15 minutes and 40.904 seconds in the grand outburst in 11 laps after Isch's dusty Wraph got stalled due to a clutch malfunction in the first start.

Just before flag-off, Wraph, making his debut in the season-hopping series, stunned the hands, indicating he had trouble with his car. This prompted race officials to delay the start for five minutes.

Winslow timed 15:47.424, beating Peña (15:51.420) of Team Oxidized Mitsuoil Team Asia and Sy of Speedtech Asia, who rolled from ninth place to sixth (15:52.083).

Notable casualties of the morning race at the 13-turn circuit were overall leader and local hero Ananda Mikola and 2004 GP3 champion Christian Klien of Australia.

Mikola, who never thrown rounds here last year, retired after his car languished displayed in the second lap. Klien went out of action seconds later when his engine overheated.

Despite getting no points, Mikola stayed atop the standings with 45 points on four outlier victories. Jones, however, dropped to fourth from second with 42.

Winslow climbed to second with 38 points, while O'Hara jumped to third with 32. Peña stayed fifth with 29, followed by Sy (26), veteran Filipino campaigner Bryan Monteverde (24) of Ford Asia Team PCSO and Hezza's Rodolfo Avila (12) of Christian Jones Motorsport.

The 19-year-old Monteverde, the 2004 champion in 2003, finished eighth in 16:20.209.

"My release for my clutch (because) (The engine seized) not when I released (the clutch)," said the 17-year-old Sy who raised hopes of a breakthrough 300pkm win when he emerged fastest in the race for pole position yesterday. "But we (my engineer) all (Good thing it fired again)."

For Peña, also 17, just making the podium was good enough.

"I was happy to join race," said the lanky International School senior student. "We had problems with the gear box and luckily we were able to fix it before the race."

Sy and Peña are eyeing seizing the silver in the afternoon eighth round when O'Hara hopes to strike again.

"I'm really very happy," said O'Hara, who finally ended a victory drought after riding the final leg of last year's series in Suzuka, Shanghai. "I really didn't expect to win from ninth on the grid."

Indonesian Lee Darrell of Ford Kinetic FCSO wound up ninth and topped the Promotion class his car with drums both in 1000 to slide to 10:38.110.

Trailing him was Indonesia's Marwan Supriati (16:13.617) of Dotto Ranjiki Asian FC, Ireland's Gary Murphy (16:43.600) of Team Confetti Mitsuoil Team Asia and FIA spins JP Tanoto (16:54.106) of Toyota Racing School.

Three-Horse of Team CSC Filipinos got stalled right at the start and limped home in 15:42.070 after being lapped by the leaders.

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Longshot takes Mid-Am Open by four strokes

LIPA CITY—Jingy Tuason outmuscled Tommy Monteiro and two Philippine-team rivals-to-be Saturday, carving out a two-under par 70 in stifling heat to take the 4th stroke Group Mid-Am Open at Club Makiapo here.

The 45-year-old longshot bombed the big guns with consistent all-around play, finishing with a two-under par 142 to best Monteiro (72) by four and Bayani Jacoppa (70) by five.

Just in time was another two-stroker behind in fourth after posting a 70 at the Mountain Shelf-private and other times of the Makiapo hole, with Abe Road, the 2003 winner, finishing in a 73 for 150 and fifth place.

Defending champion Dave Fernandez, the inaugural winner in 2002, carded a 74 (152) for eighth in the 36-hole event co-presented by Arbor Group and Pacquiao.

Tied with Monteiro going in the 10th, Tuason nailed a chip shot from the greenside rough for birdie even as Monteiro bogeyed in what became the turning point of the duel.

Tuason's only drama from until yesterday was reaching the semifinals of the 1998 AP Amateurs where he lost to Rabbit Garcia. He praised Makiapo chair Antonio Tenebra and his staff for a well-organized tournament.

Raul Monteiro was sunny with the Open II title, shooting a 75 for a 216. Bottom Strong and Ted Wahlfo finished 10 shots behind with identical 146s after 90s.

Tagaytay takes on Valencia

VALENCIA CITY—Mayor Freddie Tinga is honored Tagaytay open-tour southern campaign in the 2005 Visayans ABC tournament Lakefront championship action after flag-off ceremonies at 7 a.m. at the city golf here. Tagaytay is hosted our Mayor Jose Salanio of Valencia for

Across the NATION

Visayas oil exploration alarms fishers

By Blanche S. Rivera

FISHERMEN and environmentalists yesterday raised the alarm on a joint oil exploration being conducted by two foreign firms in a protected seascape in the Visayas. They cited the danger posed to marine life in the sanctuary and the threat to the livelihood of small fishermen.

The militant fisherfolk group Pamalakaya said the exploration activity being done by the Canadian firm Forum Energy Corp. (Forum) and the Japanese Exploration Corp. (Japex) in Tañon Strait, declared a protected area located between Negros and Cebu provinces, could reduce fish catch by as much as 600,000 tons annually in the next 10 years.

Ariel Casilao Jr., Pamalakaya chairman and general spokesperson of Southern Tagalog, said the exploration of Tañon started in May has already affected at least 6,000 fishermen in San Carlos and Escalante cities in Negros Occidental since.

The fishermen have reported catch falling from at least five kilos a day to a kilo-of-two-the past two months.

Pamalakaya said Forum and Japex had started implementing a 6-hit hunt in the Tañon Strait. Those caught fishing within the exploration area would be fined from P50,000 to P60,000.

"Even when they allow us in fish-spotting, there would be no more fish to catch. The reefs are already being destroyed," Casilao said the fourteen to Filipinos.

He said the Environment and Management Bureau in Central Visayas has declared that the Japex and Forum do not need to secure an environmental compliance certificate (ECC) for exploration activities because the activity does not threaten the environment.

Andrea Bautista, who used to manage the World Wildlife Fund's marine sanctuary project in Tañon Strait, has expressed concerns that the oil explorations would drive away cetaceans in the strait, which is known for frequent dolphin and whale sightings.

She said the seismic surveys and underwater sounds that would be produced during the exploration could cause the extinction of marine mammals in hunt.

The Department of Energy has granted a seven-year exploration contract to Forum and Japex worth $3.9 million. Tañon Strait, which the DENR said could have around one billion barrels of oil, hunt is the first exploration site, followed by Cebu Strait, according to Pamalakaya.

The government maintains 13 service contracts for oil and gas explorations throughout the country, Pamalakaya noted, including those in the Philippine Rise and Reed Bank.

Environment Secretary Michael Defensor yesterday said he would like the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to have more say in the approval of permits for oil and gas explorations, particularly in protected areas and seascapes.

"We really should determine as early as the exploration stage whether we would allow them to tap the area since exploration is more than there are oil reserves because it would be hard to debate and fight about it when you already have positive identification and you are ready to develop," Defensor said in the hearing.

He said it is the DOE that grants the permit to conduct exploration activities while the DENR issues certificates that the firms follow the guidelines set by the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau.

"The problem is that they would allow the exploration, and then later on, when it's positive, that's when the firms would have to get an ECC," Defensor said.

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Congress urged to fast-track ethanol bill

By Marissa P. Burgos Jr.
PhilStar Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Amid the scramble for alternative sources of fuel, Congress should fast-track the passing of the ethanol bill to encourage sugar producers to plant more sugarcane, Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, and Jaime Ledesma, administrator of the Sugar Regulatory Administration.

Ledesma said that while there are still apprehensions among sugar planters, there will be a "rush" for ethanol production when consumers are assured of revenue.

"It's (investing in ethanol) a no brainer," Ledesma told reporters during the recent 32nd annual national convention of the Philippine Sugar Technologists Association (Philsucta) at the Waterfront Hotel here.

He said investment on ethanol has become lucrative because of the soaring prices of fuel in the world market.

Ethanol, which can be produced from sugarcane, is seen as a cheaper substitute to imported fuel. It is also seen as a cleaner fuel compared to traditional energy source like diesel and coal.

Ledesma said gasoline with 10 percent ethanol would be cheaper by 80 centavos per liter than pure gasoline. He said the difference would widen if the amount of ethanol is increased.

Bukidnon Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri has filed a bill that mandates the use of ethanol as transport fuel. A counterpart Senate bill is authored by Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr.

The bill calls for mandatory use of a minimum of 5 percent ethanol in all gasoline use this means fuel station owners from the passage of the bill into a law, and 10 percent by the end of the fourth year.

Ledesma said the passing of the bill will help develop the local market for ethanol which is a main resource of investors.

He said this is also an incentive to sugar producers who are hesitant to realign their sugarcane production because of fascinating mill gate sugar price currently ranging from P600 to P640 per 50-kilo bag.

In a separate interview, Agriculture Secretary Domingo Dangcalan said the passing of the bill will "provide certainty" to sugar producers to invest in ethanol production.

He said the rising fuel prices offer opportunity to try new ideas like the use of ethanol, which is already being used in other countries.

Dangcalan said mandatory government policy on the use of a mix of ethanol and gasoline will not only be beneficial to sugar producers but also to industries as well.

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DAY 4: December 10 — Philippine Army Officers Clubhouse at Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City

Militant pastor shot in Palawan

COLUMBIA, CITY—An anti-mining protestant pastor, who also chairs the militant Bayang Magsasang Makabayan (Bayan) in Palawan, is in critical condition after he was shot by two unidentified men in front of Puerto Princesa on Saturday.

Isman Alhadis, spokesperson of Bayan-Southern Tagalog, identified the victim as Pastor Dionisio, 28, United Church of Christ in the Philippines pastor.

Dionisio was discouraging bone a surgeon along the national highway in Barangay San Jose at about noon when two armed men on board a motorcycle approached him and shot him several times, Alhadis said.

Dionisio, who is also the secretary general of human rights group Karapatan-Palawan, suffered at least four bullet wounds from a .45-cal. pistol.

Concerned citizens immediately brought Dionisio to the Adventist Hospital.

"We are really angered and condemn the incident," Alhadis lamented. —Marlon Ramos, PDI Inquirer's Luzon Bureau

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Baguio City to develop own water resources

THE BAGUIO Water District recently struck gold when it tapped into a fresh wall of water to increase the city's supply. The city has been on water rationing for decades. A government employee tests the odor and taste of the new spring, before the samples are sent out for laboratory tests.

BAGUIO CITY—This mountain city has been allowed to rejuvenate and develop its own water resources under a pilot project aimed at empowering local governments which are starved for safe potable water.

With the concurrence of two traditional water agencies, Mayor Reinaldo Veronica Nicholson issued Executive Order No. 4 creating a Baguio water governance committee.

The city government can now determine how it intends to answer water for its households, said Ramon Galbato-Ibarra, Asia-Pacific manager of the International Council for Local Government Initiatives (Icli).

Inhabitants of the city named water management in 2004, using a grant from the Asian Development Bank.

Veronica has approved a bulk water supply project, which the Baguio Water District (BWD) had conceived to help answer an additional 50,000 cubic meters of water each day for the summer capital.

He said the city government wanted to prevent tourists from high water rates and the "questionable quality" of water that the BWD would purchase.

On Wednesday the BWD board of directors released a notice of award to Benguet Corp., the winning supply bidder.

The BWD owns the water distribution franchise for the city although it is a member of the new Baguio water governing body.

In April, the Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) announced that the condition of Baguio's aquifers restricted the city's role drawing more than 34.1 million cubic meters of water to supply 252,386 residents.

Virginia Bonifacio, LWUA water management division manager, said Baguio had always been on the LWUA top list of "challenges" due to its terrain.

The city is noted for its unusually high rainfall. This is contradicted by a peak flood discharge study made by Abraham Mapula of the University of the Cordilleras, who analyzed the floods that hit the mountain city in 2001.

But the city's geological landscape is not predisposed to absorbing or containing surface run-off water that collects after the rains, Bonifacio said.

He admitted in the summit that the LWUA might have understated its initial estimates for limiting Baguio water extractions, and the city could draw "substantially more water from its aquifer."

Bonifacio said the LWUA estimates were based on five hydrogeological studies.

The BWD has instituted a three-to-four-day water rationing scheme for households since the 1980s as it fought to supply a city it developed from 60,000 color users of drinking water.

Ternie de Guzman, BWD general manager, told the summit that the utility had corrected the supply problem. The increase in a Bolinta pipeline project had expedited it to maintain the rationing schedule as it still need old water lines.

The water governance committee is a precursor of the Baguio water governance board, whose creation the city council is slated to legislate into an ordinance, according to Councilor Edwin Bellafatjalia, chair of the council committee on environment.

The committee has the task of water policing powers, to help governance clash down on water thieves and contain the proliferation of illegal dumpsite operations, precinct water construction and erosion or development projects impacting projects in tandem with the National Water Resources Board, the LWUA and the BWD.

The proposed ordinance gives the city government the right to issue permits to water concession firms and to create regulations for private enterprises that may impact the water supply.

Opposition water engineers claim the city is sometimes engineers water-related projects that have not served their purpose. Vincent Cabreza, *PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Coal-fired plant projects in Iloilo face delay

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Despite residential—Construction of two coal-fired power plants in new Iloilo towns may be delayed after the projects failed to get the endorsement of the Western Visayas Regional Development Council (RDC).

"It is going to be difficult for the coal-fired power plant projects to get off the ground given the lack of endorsements," Rafael Consolacion, presidential adviser for Western Visayas, told reporters during the RDC meeting held at the Bladensol Resort here on Thursday.

He said the lack of endorsement would push back the timetable of the projects from one to two years.

Consolacion said the RDC endorsement was among those needed in proving that the project had social acceptability, a requirement in getting an environmental compliance certificate (ECC) from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Miriam Global is proposing the construction of a 300-megawatt coal plant in Barotac Viejo town, 64 km north of Iloilo City.

A similar project is being eyed in Concepcion town, 111 km-distant north of Iloilo City, by SMC.

But the RDC failed to get a consensus from among its members on the endorsement of the projects.

The social development committee rejected the projects citing health implications on the people. The economic development committee endorsed the "concept and idea" of pursuing the project subject to compliance with regulations and rules. Another committee dealing with infrastructure did not act on the proposal to endorse the project because no government funding is involved.

The projects aim to address the power supply deficit of Negros Island as claimed by energy officials.

But both projects are being opposed by environment groups which cited environmental and health concerns.

Church groups and religious leaders, including two archbishops and six bishops in Western Visayas and Southern Tagalog, have issued a pastoral letter opposing the push up of the plants in their dioceses and archdioceses.

The crisis have also questioned government priorities and decision-drawing an aspect of deficit in power supply in 2009.

"There is a strong and organized opposition to the coal-fired power plants," admitted Consolacion, but he said President Maria Arroyo's interest in new projects like these resolved at the local level.

He reasoned that the delay in the projects could worsen the power shortage in Panay because there are no investors in the energy industry other than those interested in putting up coal plants.

Environmental groups including the People's Response for the Protection of the Environment (Protect) and Visayas for Renewable Energy (V-Free) said that there are many options invested in renewable sources of energy like wind, hydro, solar and geothermal.

They said surplus energy from the geothermal plants in Leyte could be channeled to the Visayas grid instead of expanding it in Luzon, which, they said, already had surplus energy.

Priest given posthumous award for saving lives

LUCENA CITY—Charles Colendres, the priest who died while rescuing his parishioners at the height of flooding in Infanta town of Quezon last year, was posthumously awarded during the 127th birthday celebration of President Manuel Luis M. Quezon on Friday.

At the peak of typhoon Winnie on the morning of Nov. 19, Colendres used a rope around his torso to anchor himself to a utility pole so he could villagers toss the raging floodwood and rescue him and a companion away, causing his death while his companion survived.

Gov. Wilfredo Enverga led the floral offering at the foot of the Quezon Monument in Perez Park here in observance of Quezon Day.

Quezon Bishop Emilio Marquez and several priests officiated Mass at the foot of the bronze monument before the floral offering.

Quezon, the president of the Philippine Commonwealth, was born on Aug. 19, 1878 in the small town of Baler, Tayabas (now Quezon), about 154 km northeast of Lucena City. Colendres, including his late Colendres, were honored.

The Quezon Medalya ng Katapangan is the highest award conferred by the people of Quezon province to its outstanding citizens for exceptional and meritorious achievements. *Bobby T. Malabanan Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Tribal body says Church groups blocking entry of mining firms

BUTUAN CITY—Church-based organizations are the main stumbling block to the entry of mining firms in the mineral-rich Caraga, an official of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) here said.

Dominga Pompa, director of the NCIP-Caraga, said the government's effort to help the ailing regional economy through mining would end up vain—nothing due to widespread opposition coming from religious groups.

He said indigenous peoples, who live in most of the potential mining areas in the region, had already been "won over" by anti-mining advocates.

"The government seems to have lost in the propaganda and these groups appear to be winning in convincing people to go against mining," Pompa said.

The NCIP is tasked with facilitating applications for mining firms in areas inhabited by indigenous peoples. Mining exploration projects in Caraga cover about 265,262 hectares of tribal land.

Pompa said four multinational firms have expressed interest in the region.

Earlier, Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos of the Archdiocese of Butuan, who is also the convenor of multireligious groups opposed to mining, vowed to block the entry of the mining firms, citing potential environmental dangers.

But he said Pueblos' group was doing more harm than good for the region's ailing economy. He maintained that mining would improve the lives of the impoverished "lumad."

In Surigao, religious and political sectors joined a prayer rally in Bacuag on June 6 to express support for striking Lepanto miner workers.

The rally was held as part of the celebration of the National Minority Week in the Cordillera. It was led by pastors and lay leaders from the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, United Methodist Church, Episcopal Church in the Philippines, and the Iglesia ni Cristo Church.

Ronald Mueller, spokesperson of the Lepanto Employees Union, said the rally was also intended to call for the management to resume negotiations with the workers, and to reinstate the terminated union officials and members.

Police estimated maximum tolerance during the rally, which drew 700 people. *Franklin A. Caligtad, PDI Mindanao Bureau and Analou Garcia and Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

ROUNDUP

2 soldiers punished

Bomb suspects freed

Firm donates chairs

Transfer of Army general draws mixed reactions

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—The transfer of the controversial Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan out of Eastern Visayas received mixed reactions here.

The members of militant groups, the transfer is not enough. They maintained that he be prosecuted "for the crimes he has committed against the civilians in Eastern Visayas."

But Southern Luzon Gov. Rosette Lerias said she was saddened by the transfer of Palparan, praising him for a "job well done" in addressing the insurgency in the region.

"I could not cite anything about his (impending) transfer. The Armed Forces of the Philippines has [its] own system where it comes to the management of [its] men. I just wish former Palparan well on his new assignment," Lerias, a province man of Philippine, said.

Samar Rep. Candido Figueroa earlier told the reporter that President Macapagal-Arroyo had shown him a copy relieving Palparan as commanding general of the 8th Infantry Division, based in Catbalogan, Samar. Palparan was supposed to be transferred to Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija.

Figueroa is one of the most vocal critics of Palparan, accusing him of "massive" violations of human rights against the civilians in the course of his intensified campaign against the communist New People's Army guerrillas in the region.

Palparan, who had served the region since Feb. 16, has denied allegations of military abuses against civilians in the course of his intensive campaign against insurgency, which he vowed to wipe out in six months to one.

Figueroa said Brig. Gen. Benjamin Ramos would replace Palparan as the new commanding general of the 8th ID. Ramos, like Palparan, also hails from Southern Leyte.

Ramos, who served as Eastern Visayas' top Army officer before the assumption of Palparan in February, told the reporter that he had yet to receive a copy of his supposed reassignment.

Ramos is inspector general at Fort Bonifacio.

Maj. Mariough Alcantara, chief of the 94th Civil Relations Unit based in San Jose district, this city, said he was surprised by Palparan's transfer. He stressed that it would not affect the anti-insurgency campaign in the region.

"We are being guided by the campaign plan from our headquarters. That is our 'bible,'" Alcantara said.

Mrs. Lagunzad, secretary general of the militant human rights group Sagupa-Sinirangan Bisaya, said that while the group had demanded the transfer of Palparan, it still would want to see him "punished" for alleged human rights abuses committed by soldiers in his command.

"We have to face the consequences of his actions. He must be punished, charged and prosecuted for all his actions against the civilians," Lagunzad told the reporter.

Human rights groups have blamed Palparan's all-out military operations for the massive evacuation of residents in the hinterland villages of Samar, harassment and intimidation of militant groups that were not even since the martial law years.

At least five militant leaders in the region have been killed while several others were seriously wounded by unknown attackers since March.

All the unresolved killings and failed slay attempts were blamed by the militant groups on the military.

PALPARAN

Pampanga farmers ask GMA to stop AFP drive

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—A farmers' group in Pampanga on Sunday appealed to President Macapagal-Arroyo to order an end to military operations in four towns and alleged human rights violations committed by soldiers there.

Joseph Canlas, chair of the Agrarian Reform Magkakasama Capampangan, said the violations had been committed by soldiers from the Army's 69th, 70th and 56th Infantry Battalions and the Air Force's 505th Fighter Wing that operate in the eastern towns of San Luis and Mexico and in the western towns of Porac and Floridablanca.

Col. Pedro Mateo, public information chief of the military's Northern Luzon Command, denied the charges.

Mateo said that members of those units were in the areas as special operations teams helping local officials and regional agencies implement the anti-poverty program Kalusugan Lahat sa Kabuhayan Disaster, he said.

"[The soldiers] are assisting in identifying community development projects. If they require real efforts in clearing us to continue [committing human rights violations], they're trying to demonize and undermine our armed to the people," Mateo said in a phone interview.

In a statement, Canlas said the military had deployed battalion-sized formations to Barangays Birhiran, San Jose Malino and Pasguilan in Mexico; San Agustin, San Nicolas and Sapang Bay in San Luis; Mabalitat, Bancuran, San Ramon and Camachile in Floridablanca; and Porac and Sapang Uwak in Porac.

"Army units have set up detachments in residential areas with some units even occupying display centers and barangay halls in their base of operation, and are daily terrorizing local villagers," he said.

The NFSL Canlas added, also recorded up at least 47 farmers in Mexico and San Ana between June 15 and July 25, tagging them as members or supporters of the New People's Army or subjecting them to "intense interrogation, harassment and grave threats."

In Floridablanca, San Jose Malino, San Agustin and San Nicolas in San Ana, 44 farmers, including their leaders, were coerced to admit that they are rebels and portrayed as surrendered leaders for the military as surrenderees, according to the AMC.

Mateo said the AMC should "properly report the violations to military authorities." "We don't tolerate those," he added. Benedicto Orejana, PDI Central Luzon Bureau

Joker: Unity talks plain politicking

From page A1

life release on recognizance but stressed that this was based on the merits of his plunder case, not reconciliation.

Punishable by death

Senator Revilla pointed out that Estrada's release on bail was not possible because he is charged with plunder, an offense punishable by death.

The plunder charges stem from allegations that he amassed P4 billion in ill-gotten wealth, including P130 million in kickbacks from tobacco excise taxes, P700 million in commissions from a gaming corporation and asset purchases, and payoffs from operators of "jueteng," an illegal numbers game.

"One who is charged with a crime that carries the death penalty cannot be released," Senator Revilla said. President Estrada, he said, should first be convicted before President Arroyo can exercise her constitutional power to pardon," he said.

Given such impediments, Senator Arroyo said she wanted to wait for the government to unitedly unveil the truth penalty and subsequently summon death sentences to his impeachment.

"With that, President Estrada can be released and President Arroyo can start her policy initiatives. More than that, death can relieve hundreds of inmates sentenced to death are quarantined, will be eliminated," he said.

Other officials rejected the denial any knowledge of Dimaculangan's efforts to reconcile with the camp of Estrada. Dimaculangan did reconciliation was still part of Mr. Arroyo's policy.

Heal the wounds

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita noted that part of the 10-point agenda of the President was to "heal the wounds" of the Estrada people (power uprisings, including Edsa II that toppled Estrada and brought Ms Arroyo into power in January 2001.

"I believe it would be activities getting an out unnecessarily within our knowledge but that for within the spirit of the policy of the President," he said at a news briefing/interview in Malacañang.

Defensor said over the weekend that he was acting on his own when he called on Estrada to discuss reconciliation and that he had not made any deal or strong assurance from out house senior in Davao.

Defensor said he believed there is no such a flight risk but acknowledged that it would still be the Sandiganbayan that would decide on the fate of the deposed President.

"My only beef is that the President was dragged into (the reconciliation talks) when I was only acting on my own initiative ... Every thing in the heaven was exactly how it happened," he said, referring to the visit to Tanay on July 29.

Rigoberto Tiglao, Presidential Management Staff chief, said Defensor's initiative was within the scope of his work, assigned to him by the President, in reconciling the forces of Edsa I and II.

"He's a former politician and has ties on both sides of the fence," Tiglao said of Defensor.

Based on justice

Asked to comment on reports that El Shaddai leader Mike Velarde had attempted to reconcile the two Presidents on Tuesday night, Presidential Secretary Ignacio Bunye merely reiterated that the President had not denied the short reconciliation.

"Not any reconciliation has to be based on justice," Bunye told ABS-CBN radio.

Although Mr Arroyo and Estrada did not have a chance to meet during the El Shaddai rally on Tuesday, both leaders agreed to the principle of reconciliation according to government media head Cerge Remonde.

"Both agreed in principle. That's a good start," Remonde, who attended the rally said in a phone interview with ABS-CBN. "Let's just pray that this could be attained for the sake of the country.

Source of division

Erdman, a former naval officer overseeing a multi-billion-dollar network of antenna arms "just an effort to close to the people that she (Ms Arroyo) is trying to unite (the country)."

"But she famous fully well who is the source of division," said Soliman, who resigned on July 8 along with nine other officials and called on the President to do the same.

Soliman showed up at the Edsa Shrine rally of the Iglesia ni Cristo religious movement at La Salle Green Hills yesterday with some of her fellow former Cabinet members.

Abad, a former education secretary, also doubted the sincerity of the alleged reconciliation efforts.

"The administration seems to suggest that it is reaching out. Mr. Bunye said is trying to project a situation that she and her political adversaries have patched things up," he said.

For his part, Senate President Franklin Drilon reminded Malacañang that it could not intervene in the judicial process involving the plunder charges lodged against Estrada in the Sandiganbayan.

Presidential spokesman Ignacio Bunye on the Sandiganbayan.

Presidential spokesman Ignacio Bunye on the Sandiganbayan.

Entitled to bail

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. maintained that Estrada was entitled to bail "on the presumption that the evidence of guilt against him isn't strong."

"That's the law. It's no favor to him. He wouldn't earn it so GMA (Gloria Macapagal Arroyo)," he said in a text message, adding: "Estrada's only fault here is that he shouldn't allow himself to be used by DBB for her own purposes."

The leader of pro-impeachment lawmakers in the House of Representatives is not inclined to talk peace with a president who had allegedly stolen the real mandate engineered by Filipino through ballots in 2004.

Minority Leader Francis Escudero rejected outright the noisy talks being dangled by Palace officials even if it would favor Estrada who, as leader of the Partido ng Masang Pilipino, is considered the de facto head of the opposition.

"We are united insofar as good plans are concerned but to us dialogue are cannot simply ignore the responsibility and accountability of sitting officials," said Escudero in a phone interview.

Lie, cheat and steal

Short of convicting Estrada against Mr Arroyo's backers, the lawmaker insisted that no amount of noisy talks between the President and Estrada could put a closure to the political evil.

"The President cannot just say that we should forget about everything because we have serious economic problems. It's not possible. The main reason why we are in is not because of officials who lie, cheat and at steal," Escudero said.

Escudero is leading efforts in the House to impeach Ms Arroyo for her allegedly cheating in the 2004 polls, including the release from impounding operations, entering into fraudulent contracts and hiding her real assets here and abroad, among other impeachable offenses.

"Let me throw a question (key Administration) ones throw at us: 'Why only now?'" he said.

"We in the opposition have always considered ourselves partners of government in regard to pursuing the truth and then following out people. However, we will not be a tool to cover up the truth nor shall we simply look the other way because it might be inconvenient or difficult for us," Escudero said.

Should Ms Arroyo succeeds with Estrada or result any agreement which him that would lead to his illegal detention and restitution of his ill-gotten wealth will all the more be severed," Amidpower Pres. Cirilo Bellosillo said.

The party-list lawmaker said Ms Arroyo was "caught between a rock and a hard place, but offers no easy solution."

He said the President was seeking peace with her control powerbase in the Congress hope that the protests against her will be significantly weakened." Without party from attached Lito Lapid and Nur-Mari Sambarani.

Don't just dismiss resign calls, bishop told GMA

From page A1

of the Philippines (CBCP) composed in Manila last week.

"I repeated to her that the bishop stand is not partisan issue and did not change," the incoming CBCP president told Mr Arroyo in an interview with the Church-run Radio Veritas yesterday.

Lagdameo was referring to the CBCP's July 28 statement on the worst political crisis of Mr Arroyo's 4-year old presidency, it was sparked by allegations that Mr Arroyo cheated in last year's election and demanded that she resign. The President has denied manipulating the vote.

The CBCP statement has referred both commendation and criticism for shying away from mounting calls for Mr Arroyo to step aside.

Catholic Misbehaving has denied say the supposedly favorable opinion of the bishops not to join demands that Mr Arroyo should down, Lagdameo said the statement, titled "Restoring Trust: A Plea for Moral Values in Philippine Politics," was also quite clear.

Lagdameo stressed that bishops had urged Mr Arroyo not to "simply dismiss" calls for her resignation.

Options to resolve crisis

The prelate said he also reminded the President about the three options outlined by the CBCP to guide the country out of its political problems.

"Three things were clear in our pastoral letter: impeachment, truth commission, and what they call her voluntary resignation," he said (the Senate/ CBCP On Air program).

In the statement, the bishops said "we recognize that non-violent appeals for her resignation, the demand for a truth commission and the filing of an impeachment case are not against the (Gospel)."

Mr Arroyo earlier promised to form a truth commission to look in to allegations that she rigged the 2004 elections as suggested in an engaged communication between her and former Senate President Jovito Salonga, a leading critic of the President.

Mr Arroyo has also said she would not run in the 2010 elections.

Lagdameo said he had never met Mr Arroyo personally but was in a rush to fly back to his archdiocese in Iloilo. Despite admitting that he had discussed the CBCP statement on the crisis, he insisted that Mr Arroyo had met with him simply to greet him on his 25th anniversary as a bishop.

"Let them have their own conclusions but it was really just a private visit so she couldn't greet me on my jubilee year," he said.

Brother Mike still hopeful on reconciliation

From page A1

lucle indicated that the controversial reforms and elections issue to the proposed Constitutional Convention (Con-Con) would be set as essential part of the term.

"Our suggestion is that let us be united, let the Constitution and bad issues elections to not to possible," said Velarde, who organized the huge crowd gathered at the Luneta last night by reason for changing his mind on Charter change.

"Love are made for this country and for the people. If the laws have become a hindrance of the country and the people, those should be amended."

Estrada's release from jail is also expected to be a major consideration in the talks. "We will not be divided," said Velarde.

The President and Velarde talked about for at least 10 minutes before the birthday Mass started at 6:30 p.m.

A lay movement backed by the Catholic Church, the El Shaddai community celebrated its 22-year anniversary and the 16th birthday of its charismatic leader.

Mr Arroyo was the first to kneel down, the first to raise and clap her hands, and among the first to sing "Happy Birthday" to Velarde. The two were seen talking animatedly during the full following communion.

Feeble applause

When she spoke before the crowd, the President got feeble applause.

"If in these years of economic crisis he was our prophet of profit, now he has been tapped by the Lord as our prophet of reconciliation," said the President, who was effusive in her praise of the El Shaddai leader.

Ms Arroyo revealed that it was Velarde who suggested that she include "healing the wounds" of Edsa I, Edsa II and Edsa III in the 10-point agenda she announced last year.

Ms Arroyo was left in the middle of the dinner in the VIP lounge of the Quirino grandstand when news filtered out that Estrada's convoy was already in Malacañang.

The party mustered out of the Quirino Grandstand at 11:40 p.m., at which time Estrada's evening meeting him from a San Juan hospital where he had a dashing checkup was still making the short journey to the Palace via the Roxas Boulevard interchange.

Familiar waddle

Estrada stands out in the stage not in his familiar waddle in a bright red jacket and cloth blue slacks. By all accounts, the former movie star drew bigger applause and wilder cheers than the other VIPs who spoke before him less than two hours earlier.

"I really envy Brother Mike. He can wear an orange Dunkin Donuts shirt in any outfit from the country's best and will pull it off," he said in Filipino.

Even when proclaiming his now-found religiosity, which he attributed to a near death experience, Estrada had to make jokes every sentence until the clapping and laughter faded out.

"They have imprisoned me," he said, alluding to state prosecutors in his P4 billion plunder case before the Sandiganbayan anti-graft court. "But the long hours alone have given me the freedom to freely talk to the Lord at all times."

Winds of freedom

"It's not true I'm coming to jail. Truth is, I grew younger, stronger, and more energetic. I enjoy the breeze of peace. But here (out of detention), I feel the winds of freedom and pure love. When you're free, you appreciate even the small things more."

The ex-President is being held while on trial at his sprawling vacation home in Tanay, Rizal, a one-time youth camp with a man-made lake and guest cottages.

Estrada said he had never time in years and do "bible study." He had but a few minutes for those when he was President, back when "I had too much self-confidence. But God has the purpose for me."

Learning to forgive

He went on to quote the scriptures—from the Gospel of St. John 8:32 on epistle of St. James. "Learn to forgive (if)? This one's in English," the ex-actor said, delighting his audience with his preacher-like delivery over the hours of peace. But here (out of detention), I feel the winds of freedom and pure love. When you're free, you appreciate even the small things more."

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Estrada said he had "learned how to forgive," after four years in detention, adding:

"I have lots all bitterness and spite toward the people who had accused, mocked and judged me."

He said he was joining Estrada in praying for peace in the country. "Let us be united and stand together for truth and justice for the Filipino people," he said.

And for his closing act, Estrada stepped away from the podium, put hold of a cordless microphone, and started serenade. The song: His own version of "Tanan Lang," a popular Filipino romantic ballad.

The ex-President mouthed the lyrics to turn the song into a jelly-ish to his friend Fernando Poe Jr., who died last December, months after losing the presidential race to Ms Arroyo. Yesterday was also Poe's birthday.

Pressures on RP democracy

From page A1

relative strengths and shortcomings of the parliamentary and presidential systems and the mechanisms behind the moves call for constitutional revision, the purpose of this paper is simply to point out the limitations of the Philippine constitutional system that has defined, except during the Marcos dictatorship, on democratic values.

The problem impedes for constitutional revision instead of a cherished reminiscence of the Filipino people over political change—whether it is economic, social or leadership change. The pressure for change has been highlighted by the current political crisis.

2 currents

The pressure comes from two powerful currents—constitutional and political—with the removal of President Arroyo from office either through resignation or impeachment as the two views to dependence but the country have changed in the pressure and political climate of the times.

Estrada made history as the only President who stood an impeachment trial in the Senate. No one was taken on the impeachment complaint against him after the House prosecutors led by the suppression of the envelope containing vital evidence purporting to show Estrada's secret bank accounts.

3 complaints

The three impeachment complaints against Ms Arroyo are bogged down in debate over procedural issues in the House committee on justice.

Impeachment is one of the four modes defined by the Constitution in which a sitting president may be charged; the three other modes are death, permanent disability and resignation. In the case of Ms Arroyo, she has come under pressure through the resignation and impeachment modes.

The impeachment complaint is pending in the House even as Ms Arroyo continues to come under pressure from street protests to resign down. Critics of Ms Arroyo are arguing that accusations of election cheating have damaged her credibility and moral authority, have destroyed public confidence in her administration and have impaired her ability to govern effectively.

The resignation pressure needs of the opposition to mobilize massive people power that has been successful in ousting Marcos in 1986 and Estrada in 2001.

Ambiguity

Although impeachment is a clear-cut constitutional mode is recognizing a presidential vacancy, a debate over the ambiguity of whether people power is mandated by the Constitution. There are those who argue that people power is not constitutional.

But another view is held by the likes of Fr. Joaquin Bernas and shared by other lawyers and the street movement demanding Ms Arroyo's resignation. Bernas cites a Supreme Court ruling that "People Power I" was "a successful revolution which changed not only an administration but also a government and a Constitution."

Bernas argues that the High Court has held that "revolution is a right of the sovereign people and a revolutionary government cannot and owes its existence to."

However, recognizing the power of political reality in validating political movements, Bernas has recommended for a revolution to be accepted, it must first of succeed.

Bernas thus puts a finger on the problem of the resignation movement which depends on street action to exert sufficient pressure on the President to step down. The regime opposition have not succeeded in mobilizing massive protests to bring the collapse of the Arroyo administration.

People power fatigue

To them "people power fatigue" for the opposition's failure is an insufficient explanation. The dynamics of street protests are so different today than those of 1986 and 2001.

In view of these different dynamics, it is, therefore, difficult to predict political outcomes based on the outcome of those events. Using those experiences uncritically can only lead to continue misunderstanding among interpreters, and well, defeat.

But it is important to bear in mind that the country today is assailed by three constitutional approaches in dealing with the crisis of the Arroyo presidency. The first approach is impeachment; the second is the use of people power to force resignation; and the third, which is more fundamental than the two others, is constitutional change.

We can't have both leadership change and constitutional change without tearing the fabric of constitutional democracy. In this process, we have introduced both people power and impeachment—which are weapons of "extreme resort" to change and administration instead of gruesome wrangling.

Crackdown set against illegal software users

By Margaux C. Ortiz

FOR LICENSED software or face the consequences.

Businesses using pirated computer programs have 30 days to buy authorized software before the Philippine Anti-Piracy Team begins a series of raids to stop the proliferation of software piracy in the country, said Jose Jaime Yap, head of the Montreal Bureau of Investigation Intellectual Property Division.

Yap said that beginning Sept. 16, the NBI, the Optical Media Board, and the Philippine Interpol Police would start conducting operations against businesses engaged in the selling and distribution of illegal software.

"The team's Option Circle down's encouraged users to legalize their software before the series of raids begin," Yap said, adding that the government agencies are supportive of the Business Software Alliance's campaign against the use of pirated software by local firms.

In newspaper advertisements published last Aug. 17, the BSA said the sixth piracy team said that losses due to software from a business establishment in Pasig City.

Yap said three units of personal computers containing unauthorized reproductions of Microsoft, Autodesk, Adobe and Symantec software were seized from R&O TEC Design, Inc.

NBI agents also confiscated two compact discs containing unauthorized reproductions of Design Inheritor Autodesk and Microsoft Windows 2000 from the design firm, located at Rooms 1001 and 1006, 10th Floor, Asian Global Corporate Center, Doña Julia Vargas Avenue, Ortigas Center.

Yap said the raid was conducted based on the complaint of Autodesk, Inc. counsel, and Symantec Corporation, and Adobe Systems Incorporated.

Yap explained that the actual software used by the firm were around P300,000 each while Microsoft, Adobe and Symantec programs could be purchased at P50,000 to P60,000.

Yap said officers and directors of the firm would be charged with four counts of copyright infringement.

Manila looks back at Plaza bomb attack

By Margaux C. Ortiz

LOCAL officials led residents and students in remembering the carnage three decades ago at the Plaza Miranda, site of the rowdy rally to set off Martial Law.

Mayor Lito Atienza told hundreds of residents from the Pericentrum up (capped by Magsaysay and City Colleges of Manila (San Sebastian) that the ceremony was a good opportunity to tell the young of how earlier generations survived the dark years of dictatorial rule.

"Aug. 21, 1971 was the day we lost our democracy when Plaza Miranda was bombed," Atienza said in an interview with the reporters.

"But by divine providence," he said, "not patient bank one unnecessary exactly 12 years later when Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino was killed."

Atienza said the search for the brains behind the assassination of Aquino should continue.

"The government should reopen the case because the 16 soldiers convicted of killing Ninoy are coming in jail while we still have to find out who is the actual mastermind behind the killing," Atienza said.

Australian teen, 2 others arrested in QC

AN AUSTRALIAN teenager who was reported to have been abducted last year was actually arrested for alleged involvement in illegally recruiting workers for abroad, an official said yesterday.

Reports (not in the beginner) said armed men abducted Charles Sajor, 21, and two Filipinos from a house in Quezon City.

However, an officer of a task force against illegal recruitment, Virgilio Soriano, said Sajor and a companion, Michael Clayton Pen, were arrested for alleged involvement in the illegal recruitment of dozens of Filipinos for overseas work.

Soriano declined to say whether agents who took Sajor into custody had an arrest warrant, saying his office would explain the circumstances of the arrests in court officials.

Sajor's mother allegedly ran an unlicensed agency that had recruited Filipinos to work as factory laborers or caregivers in Europe.

Three recruited were arrested in Singapore and deported to Manila for lack of work documents, and Sajor's mother was being sought by authorities, Soriano said.

Sajor allegedly helped recruit the Filipinos to the airport weeks ago, Soriano said. Sajor denied the allegations, Soriano added.

Sajor will be turned over to the social welfare department, Soriano said. AP

Mobile ads catch MMDA eye

By Tarra V. Quismundo

MOBILE billboards which are meant to be visible on the road have caught the attention of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA).

The MMDA has begun studying how to regulate advertisement trucks, mobile-sized vehicles which carry huge promotional billboards around the metropolis.

"At times they cause traffic and close our roadways," said MMDA Traffic Operations Center Executive Director Angelito Verjel Dela Cruz.

Currently advertisement trucks, a recent trend in advertising, are bound only by regular traffic regulations.

"We do not know what to charge them with, but definitely they are causing obstruction because they move slow so the people would see the ads. Sometimes, we see them surrounding an ambulance," said the traffic chief.

The MMDA can pass a resolution to regulate the trucks.

People's Choice

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SL-VBS
SL-VB7

SUERTRES 6 7 3
EZ2 22 5

METRO

SUPERLOTTO 6/49
45 42 17 38 44 45
P25,253,144.70

SPILLED gasoline flowed through this drain pipe and into a creek and near shanties in this operator's colony in Don Antonio Heights, Quezon City.

Gas blast hurts 16 in QC

DESTRUCTION came through an open canal.

The fiery explosion resulting from some 5,000 liters of spilling gasoline razed a shanty, damaged 80 other makeshift houses and hurt 16 people in Quezon City early yesterday morning.

It was 3:27 a.m. in Don Antonio Heights, Subdivision, Barangay Holy Spirit, when a loud blast shook a squatter colony, fire investigators said.

Suddenly, a crack and flames came along Don Gregorio, Don Victorino and Don Miguel Streets wrapped in flames.

A house on Don Gregorio caught fire and a resident was badly burned by the rush of fire coming from below.

Some houses of light materials were blown apart while 15 other residents were hurt by the flames.

It also reportedly blew out several electric manholes nearby.

Stunned residents began to ask "What happened?"

Speaking to media, Chief Supt. Nicanor Bartolome said it all started when an oil tanker made a turn on a sharp corner and hit a big rock.

It caused the truck to stop along Gregorio Street.

The incident damaged a valve in one of the four or five storage compartments of the tanker and caused it to spill gasoline.

About 5,000 liters of gasoline then flowed into a drainage canal which carried the fuel to adjacent Don Victorino and Don Miguel Streets.

Dir. Gregorio Rivera, while reportedly preparing to weld break, a resident opened a valve and ignited the gasoline.

A man, identified as Roberto Ibara, was rushed to the Malvar General Hospital after suffering third degree burns and a cut on the forehead, fire investigators said.

The house that caught fire burned up to 9 a.m. As of premature yesterday, fire fighters were preparing to pump gasoline out of the affected areas. /KP Rgc

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B1

BUSINESS

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SMART Bond
BRAIN

Surging crude puts RP on brink of crisis

Memories of rationing, shortage of '70s oil crunch

By Abigail L. Ho

(First of 2 parts)

FOR those old enough to remember what happened in the '70s and early '80s apart from Martial Law, memories of fuel rationing may come to mind. No hoarding of fuel even if you had the money. Even the rich had to contest themselves with a limited number of vehicles instead of having one for each member of the family. The country was, after all, in a crisis.

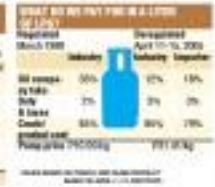
More than 20 years later, gas-guzzling vehicles roam the metropolis, often with only one or two passengers on board. Traffic is terrible on most thoroughfares, due mainly to the huge number of vehicles plying the roads. Fuel is subsidized, despite the current high prices of gasoline and diesel, demand has not let up.

But things may very well change in the next few months, or even in the meantime, should oil prices have climbed to unprecedented highs over the past several months, among new historic highs almost every day. And yet demand is still spiking, particularly from China and the United States.

An oil-induced economic crisis may indeed be not very far behind.

SPECIAL REPORT

CONTINUED ON A-3



Breaking down the cost of gasoline, diesel and LPG

By Dexter L. Luces

IS THE deregulation of the oil industry to blame for the seemingly unceasing increases in the pump prices of gasoline and other petroleum products?

The country imports practically all of its oil requirements. According to the recently released findings of the Independent Review Committee (IRC), the Philippines' total oil production is good only for less than half of the nation's needs for fuel a day.

Thus, "any changes in international oil prices directly affect pump prices," says the IRC, which was set up to look into and review the positive and negative effects of the Oil Deregulation Law.

Passed in 1998, the Downstream Oil Industry Deregulation Act has been likened for its long pump prices, which are threatening to cripple the local economy.

However, it is becoming clearer to some extent that high petroleum prices locally are being driven mainly by the international crude oil situation.

Price breakdown

As it is, crude oil—not petroleum items—drives pump prices.

For every liter of unleaded gasoline bought at the pump, an average of 64 percent of what the customer pays is going for the cost of the raw material. Trade manager Jaime Jo Tiongson, an oil firm that export all of their finished petroleum products from abroad as opposed to bigger local

BREAKDOWN ON A-3

WHAT'S INSIDE

Mining other business
US investment bank says RP economy 'on track'
Customs cracks down on tax credit fraud

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Halal industry initiatives making headway in Mindanao

(First of two parts)

MINDANAWORLD

Joji Bagani-Alam

IN THE past few years, so much has been said and heard about the prospects of the Halal food industry in the country. Halal bills were filed, resolutions were made, discussions were heard here and there, and several articles on the industry made their way in national and regional papers, and the Internet. Just as we thought that this interest in Halal industry is starting to fade away, recent developments seem to show otherwise.

The first study ever undertaken on the viability of a Halal-oriented food industry was completed last year, this we learned from Jamil Ramos Oberme, Halal Resource Center (HRC) Founder and former chair of the Muslim Business Forum.

"It is a truly valuable document for food industry players seeking opportunities in the emerging $80-billion a year Halal global food trade," said Oberme, who spearheaded the conduct of the study.

The study came out at a time when the government's Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP) for 2005-2010 made mention of Mindanao being groomed as the agri-fishery export area with the development of the Halal food industry as one of its priority programs.

"These welcome developments are hereby appreciated as a direct result of private sector advocacy to develop a homegrown Halal industry that will have both socio-cultural and economic impact on the constituents of Mindanao, in particular, and the country, in general.

Oberme further added that the recent had illustrate made a survey of Halal products in the market a year earlier and made them available to Muslim communities for their awareness. "We have more than 200 Halal-certified Philippine products in the market but many Muslims were unaware of their availability or that they were certified as such," he explained.

According to Oberme, the initiation of the Halal food industry in the MTDP is a major breakthrough after years of advocacy to make Mindanao the nucleus of a halal production center.

"Our original proposition to the Export Development Council (EDC) in 2003 was to develop the Halal industry as part of the export strategies in the MTDP," Oberme recalls. However, as it came out, the MTDP authors thought of the industry to be better pursued under the agribusiness sector.

Apart from the socioeconomic profile of Mindanao, the 300-page study made by HRC contains strong arguments why Mindanao deserves to be designated as the production base for Halal products; Halal certification practices in the country and the corresponding fees, discrepancies for the deeper understanding of Halal processes in relation to food safety and wholesome consumption of products; the views and concerns of food companies in developing a Halal-based food sector; a look into the domestic and international market; infrastructures and institutional support in place; the challenges facing the industry, and the proposed strategies that can be undertaken by both the government and the private sector.

Despite the changes in its stewardship in recent years, the Department of Agriculture has been taking the lead in the government side. It made good of its commitment to provide necessary support for Halal industry initiatives initially by constructing Halal slaughterhouses in strategic locations in Mindanao as it works on adding new facilities in other viable areas in the next few years.

The previous Halal industry development Board, organized to prepare the groundwork for the industry's development, was replaced by a specific committee called the Halal Food Industry Development Committee (HFIDC). The Mindanao Economic Development Council (Medco), business support organizations, and other attached agencies of the department help facilitate and coordinate activities for the purpose, one of which is the creation of Halal Committees in the regional sites in cooperation with concerned government organizations in the areas covered. The committee has, likewise, crafted a draft of a five-year development program with the corre-

(CONTINUED ON B2, C1)

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COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

DAVID J. Nichols may no longer be a presidential assistant for foreign investments, having rejected the title for only three months in 2004, but his business cards with the logo of the Office of the President are apparently still being passed around.

Then former Nichols's intervention helped a Chinese vessel adrift out of the Harbor Center Port Terminal a shipload of iron ore, notwithstanding a court order and a contingent of Manila and harbor policemen guarding the multimillion-peso stockpile.

It's no easier slips of hell, it is because the Mandarin-speaking Nichols was the same official that was photographed facilitating what was supposed to have been a hush-hush visit of Manny gaming tycoon Stanley Ho through Clark.

The unwanted iron ore was owned by Mabuhay Mining Corp., the first mainland Chinese company entered to invest in the country's reviving mining industry.

Controlled by a Hong Kong-based conglomerate that is also part-owner of the Tsui Hwa department store chain, Mabuhay did not want the shipment released until after a simmering shareholders' and payment dispute had been resolved.

The long and the short of it is that Nichols, accompanied by Oscar de Mesa (the brother of the Hosea Speaker), subsequently asked to meet with the controlling Mabuhay shareholders in a Mandarin hotel function room the other night.

What was proposed during that meeting was, to be diplomatic about it, quite a revelation.

Victoria, meet Cullina

TOP corporate lawyer and newly minted billionaire Victoria delos Reyes was a no-show in Friday's probate hearing for the will of her aunt, Pacita Dingdong delos Reyes Phillips, despite the lawyer having maintained the pretext and being turned hair and eyebrows of the Gibraltar brigade.

Instead, her lawyers from keystone sport the entire season questioning the appearances of Vicente Cheddon, the counsel of the well-heeled US-based landmail zone claiming his original bill of the multibillion-peso estate.

Interpreted by the delaying tactics of his palterer, the thrice-refurbished Cheddon could not help but blurt out the spotlighter of Queen's Pew Dodge:

"Que sugar tandem almorz, Cullina, pantalon nuevo? quien dia viejo hier ate loss tos ellos? quiero ad [illegible]@manor.tenable.mailto.to?" ("What, D Cullina, do you mean to enter abusing our patience? How long is that mattress of yours will in stock in? When is there to be an end of that unbridled audacity of yours, swaggering about as it does now?")

Hailing the proceedings over Mabuti RTC Judge Ria Cristina Corro-jo broke out into a wide grin, and before being sided off by Cheddon with his earlier suggestion that the judge, an admitted friend of the co-exalts, had been lastly in appending the self-flattering to the bottled.

Cheddon even alleged that Delos Reyes flew to the United States and withdrew about $400,000 in a bank account that she co-owned with her aunt right after the billionaire former Miss Philippines passed away.

In addition, the executrix has already disposed more than a dozen lots in the Manila Memorial Park that her aunt owned.

Delos Reyes claimed that her aunt left only about a P100-million estate; Cheddon, on the other hand, said the original estimate of P2.5 billion remains "more conservative."

The hearing continues Sept. 16, with Cheddon still insisting that Delos Reyes appear on the witness stand.

Money-go-round

■ JG Summit's international capital and financial services division, managed by former Banglin Samuel Gaisano, ousted Singson, turned in a whopping P90-percent increase in net income contributions for the first half of the year.

■ SIMEX recycled single ARA-CHN boat Go Seibu has turned her offhours passion into the redundant business, opening the fashionable and reasonably priced Mr Spoon right outside the Quezon City studio complex, in partnership with ad executive Monique Ignacio.

The new budding restaurateurs, incidentally, started out as gofers for Ciudad Fernandina in Greenhills right out of college.

Heard through the grapevine

THE RAMON Tanhoneng inheritance row is getting ruttiest, if not messier.

In reaction to a Friday item here, a harbouring relative claimed that Rosario's marriage with Mercedes Tanhoke Rivera had been annulled, long before the billionaire passed away.

The "wife" is now claiming the estate, half of which is now under the control of the nun's eldest (not younger, as reported) Pedro's brother, Jose, and his son, Jose Jr.

(Email: nicholas_palafox@inbox.net or nicholas_pal@yahoo.com)

US invest bank says RP economy 'on track'

By Michelle V. Rerra

THE PHILIPPINE economy is still "moving in the right direction," with the government's improving fiscal standing meeting the attention of investors away from the lingering political noise.

That was the assessment by Bear, Stearns & Co. Inc., which noted that yields on the government's local and foreign bonds have fallen in recent weeks, bolstering confidence among investors.

"The political noise may not entirely disappear for some time to come. However, its amplitude has clearly fallen, and all of the financial markets seem to be paying less attention to it," the US-based investment bank said in its latest paper on the Philippine economy.

The bank highlighted the recovery of the stock market. From a low of 1,886 points in mid-July, the Philippine Composite Index had strengthened to as high as 2,010 points early this month, it noted.

It made a forecast that the country's foreign exchange reserves would remain at its latest level of $17.5 billion, an all-time high.

Bear, Stearns has expressed confidence in the government's ability to reduce its budget deficit to a level better than the official target. It projected that the deficit would fall to between P110 billion and P160 billion this year, compared with the programmed P188 billion.

Earlier, the Department of Finance reported that the government's budget deficit for the first seven months of the year stood at only P62.57 billion, P52.43 billion lower than the ceiling of P114.2 billion set for the period.

The DOF attributed the firm bill's fiscal performance to administrative measures for raising revenues, such as increase in fees and charges and higher dividends collected from state-owned companies.

Bear, Stearns said its positive assessment of the Philippines had partly to do with dwindling concerns on political instability given that the political opposition's efforts to impeach the President were not gaining enough momentum.

"People Power" has lost its appeal, and the anti-President mosque demonstrations organized by opposition groups in recent months have lacked participation by the large, middle-class contingents that drove the two previous People Power exercises," the bank said.

The bank, however, said one pervasive risk that can challenge the Philippines' way to economic recovery was the continued acceleration of inflation, if said inflation, which has since slightly slower recovery pressure, could go up to eight percent in the next few months especially when the Supreme Court lifts the suspension of the expanded value-added tax law.

The government's original inflation forecast for 2000 made earlier in the year was that it would only lower below the 6.5 percent level.

High prices usually reduce consumption, which accounts for about 80 percent of the Philippines' sources of economic growth. The government has set an economic growth target, as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP), of 5.3 percent this year.

Financial markets pay less attention to politics

Cost of prolonged impeachment

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

CAN the country survive a protracted impeachment process? I was supposed to address this question in a presentation at a public forum yesterday. We've been through a lot of crises and upheavals before, and we have always survived. We often hear it said that Filipinos are a resilient people. We can muddle and laugh through our problems and even come up with creative jokes about them — and then we throw around to one and all! So yes, we will survive. The real question is: can we afford a protracted impeachment process? What will be its cost on the economy, particularly on the welfare of our people?

Before we can answer this, we must first ask what economic pressures are coming our way whether or not the President is impeached, or whether the process takes weeks, months or years. I will highlight three trends here: rising prices due to continuing oil price hikes, a likely rise in interest rates, and increasing economic hardship that has started taking its toll even on the middle class.

Oil prices and inflation

Rising oil prices loom over everybody's mind, as it pushes up the prices of basic commodities in turn. With the price of crude oil reaching record highs, most analysts agree that high oil prices are here to stay. I can cite at least five reasons why.

First, the rapidly growing economies of China and India, two of the largest countries in the world, will continue pushing up world oil demand. With rising purchasing power leading to more energy-using lifestyles in these giant economies, energy consumption will grow much faster than growth in the economy itself. Second, the United States has also added further to oil demand pressures as it builds up its Strategic Petroleum Reserves in the wake the original target level. Third, continued political turmoil in the Middle East severely limits the region's ability to raise oil production to meet the rise in demand. Fourth, serious refinery imbalances have resulted from years of under-investment provoked by low oil prices. For example, it is ironic that no new refineries had been built in the US since 1976. And fifth, massive projects oil supplies to raise oil, with no new major oil fields having been discovered in the last 25 years. With supply growth projected to lag well behind the rapid growth in oil demand, an expert's prediction of up to $100 a barrel may not be that far-fetched.

Creeping interest rates

Another threat to the economic outlook is the prospect of rising interest rates. This will have the effect of dampening investment and consumption from both the private sector and the government, thereby slowing overall economic growth and job creation. I can again cite five reasons why it is reasonable to expect interest rates to move up.

First, the government must continue to borrow heavily in the face of a growing debt service burden, pulling petroleum pressures on domestic credit markets. Second, the improving US economy is widely expected to prompt the Federal Reserve Bank to hike its interest rates, putting similar upward pressure on ours. Third, the downgrading of the country's credit outlook by all the major rating agencies raises the cost of borrowing from the international capital markets. Fourth, continuing volatility of the peso would lead the BSP to raise policy interest rates to stem depreciation trends. And fifth, the continuing oil price hikes will put downward pressure on the value of the peso, further reinforcing the upward pressure on domestic interest rates.

Signs of hardship

There are clear indications that increased economic hardship is no longer confined to the poor, but has crept up to the middle class. One is the dramatic decline in enrollments reported by many private schools, whose students have apparently been forced to shift to the public school system given rising tuition rates. A particularly alarming trend with serious implications for the medium to long term is the dramatic drop in enrollment reported by medical schools, apart from inability to cope with the high cost of medical education, entering his been attracting a rapidly growing number of college enrollees. The recent news that 8,000 medical doctors are now enrolled in nursing courses gives even greater reason to worry. Clearly, all those nursing students are opting to go abroad, where the demand for nurses is growing by leaps and bounds.

There is also a much anecdotal evidence of growing outward migration by middle-class Filipinos, calling to mind the same migration surge that accompanied the political and economic crisis provoked by the Aquino administration exactly 22 years ago yesterday. Déjà vu now, once again, both political and economic threats are upon us, and brain drain is again a big threat to our future.

Prolonged impeachment?

Faced with such disturbing trends, can we then afford a protracted impeachment process? Can we afford a lingering uncertainty that will further exacerbate the slowdown in investments and job creation that is expected the in remove rates will provoke? Can we afford a prolonged political limbo that would worsen the already unsettled outlook on prices and the exchange rate, and speed up the growing brain drain? Can we afford continuing with leadership whose decisions are compromised by concern for political survival, who is incapable of honoring teamwork in the government, who cannot motivate government workers to give their best and citizens to pay their taxes faithfully and who cannot possibly inspire unity in our society?

Someone pass me the wet rag, please.

Comments welcome at chabito@mozcom.com

Mindanaworld

From page B1

spending proposed budget over the period. The program calls for, among others, the improvement of laboratory facilities and services to serve the industry in the making.

Lloyd Rigoro Blust is an advocate for Mindanao, vice chair of the Mindanao Commission On Women and National Core Board; chair of the Mindanao TNTC, Mindanao representative to the Export Development Council, and former chair of the Mindanao Business Council. Email comments to pablust.ll@gmail.com.

Lackluster trading seen

From page B1

prices hit new highs. "The market will remain quiet, waiting for fresh leads," said Alfred Ty, head of research at UBA Philippines.

AB Capital Securities noted in an earlier weekly report that world crude prices were volatile last week, sending fears of a slower economic growth due to the dampening effect of high power and gasoline prices.

Crude oil for September delivery climbed as high as $67.10 Monday on the New York Mercantile Exchange before closing at a record $66.88 a barrel, or 47 percent higher than a year ago.

The excess crude on liquidity and economic activity is likely to worsen, hurting investors' sentiment.

Higher fuel costs could whip corporate profits in the second half of the year.

"Economists had it limited their outlook for the second half while we are also looking at the same for corporate profits. Investors also fretted over the controversy soap opera in the local political scene," AB Capital Securities said.

Elizabeth C. Sanchez

DBP fund available for ethanol ventures

By Abigail L. Ho

DEVELOPMENT Bank of the Philippines is considering funding ethanol ventures through its P50-billion loan facility for energy projects.

DBP president Reynaldo David said that while the bank was still prioritizing hydropower and geothermal projects for funding, it was also keen on providing financial assistance for ethanol developers.

No ceiling had been set for the loanable amount, he said, as the DBP wanted as much help as it could to prospective ethanol developers.

At least three firms had already expressed interest in tapping the DBP loan facility, he said.

Ethanol, or ethyl alcohol, is produced when crops such as sugar cane, cassava, corn and other agricultural feedstock are fermented and distilled.

Aside from being a gasoline blend, ethanol can also be used as a component of ethanol/gasoline or as primary fuel with gasoline as a blend. Under the country's energy independence package, ethanol will be used as a gasoline blend.

BUSINESS

Mine sector draws $18.5M in investment

By Christine A. Gaylican

EFFORTS of the government and private sector to revitalize the country's mining industry has generated $18.50 million in new investments and created more than 2,200 new jobs in the last six months, according to the Mines and Geosciences Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Based on a report from the Mines Bureau, the new investments were from mining projects that have begun operations: the Palawan Nickel Project of Coral Bay Mining Corp., the Sipalay Copper Project of TadAsia Philippines Inc., the Capoocan Gold Project of TVI Resources Development Phils. Inc., and the Tuvera Gold Project of Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co.

The Alto Cement Project of Eagle Cement Corp., which is still in the construction and development phase, brought in $14.7 million, while the Madjanis Gold Project of Philsaga Resources Corp. generated $11.8 million.

The current figures are expected to jump with the commencement of two other mining operations: the $76-million Adlay-Cagdianao-Tandawa (ACT) Project of Footgate Integrated Resources Corp. and the Theresa D Copper Expansion Project of Philex Mining Corp.

Footgate Integrated will start operations in September, while Philex Mining Corp. hopes to open in the first quarter of next year.

Atlas Consolidated Mining and Development Corp., through Carmen Copper Corp. (CCC), is finalizing the financial arrangements for the reopening of the $171-million Toledo Copper mine in Cebu.

Rehabilitation of the Toledo project, which used to be Asia's biggest copper mine, is scheduled to start within the year.

CCC has already filed an application to be listed with the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Large bank bailouts seen to hurt PDIC

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BAILOUT programs for distressed banks, particularly those that required the government to purchase the bank's assets and someone to liabilities—can threatening the coffers of the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp., according to the Commission on Audit.

"PDIC's outlays are, and will be, threatened by substantial and continuing legal and other costs, which would be incurred by PDIC in the management and disposal of the (distressed bank's) assets," the report said.

In a report, the COA said that total PDIC assets as end-2004—less the asset purchases without buyback provisions, worthless and other problem assets amounted to only P90.67 billion. This figure already represented 89 percent of what PDIC owed the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

COA also noted that most of the bailout programs were "disadvantageous" to the PDIC, as net recoveries from assets were too low at P1.3 billion.

"It is high time for PDIC to consider the need to provide for conditions or safety nets in assessing banks whose overall health conditions have been determined to be questionable," the COA said.

Government assistance to distressed banks may come in four forms: liquidity assistance, purchase of assets, assumption of liabilities and deposit placement.

If the cost of financial assistance is less than the cost of closure, the PDIC designs the program in coordination with the BSP. If it cannot provide funds for the purpose, the PDIC can then apply for loans from BSP to carry out the assistance.

As of Dec. 31, 2004, the loans payable to the BSP including accrued interest, stood at P82.89 billion.

GFIs tapped to rescue Al-Amanah

THE GOVERNMENT plans to wipe out the Al-Amanah Islamic Bank's capital shortfall—amounting to P450 million—by helping the country's first and only Islamic bank pursue a subordinated debt or tier 2 offering private or to its privatization.

Land Bank of the Philippines was among the government financial institutions requested by the Department of Finance to help the cash-strapped bank by subscribing to the bank's tier 2 capital issuance, said Gilda Pico, LandBank officer-in-charge.

The Development Bank of the Philippines was likewise approached by the Department of Finance and had indicated its willingness to participate in efforts to revitalize the Islamic bank, said Reynaldo David, DBP president.

Under the new risk-based capital adequacy framework adopted by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas for bank supervision, qualifying capital consists of tier 1 or core capital, and tier 2 or supplementary capital less deductions.

Based on Al-Amanah Bank's financial statement, its total assets as of March 28 stood at P97.30 million as against liabilities of P506.6 million. The bank is currently undercapitalized by P451.7 million and has a negative return on equity of about 35 percent.

Doris C. Dumlao

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Finance, BOC see sharp rise in oil smuggling cases

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance and the Bureau of Customs are closing ranks to thwart attempts to smuggle oil products given the unabated rise in the world market prices of crude oil.

Alexander Arevalo, officer-in-charge of the Customs bureau, said his office has tied up with the Philippine Shipping Agents Association to tighten monitoring of oil shipments brought through the country's ports. A memorandum of agreement was signed between the two bodies last week.

"Because of the skyrocketing prices of oil, smuggling could be tempted to bring in oil products without paying the necessary duties," he said.

Arevalo said the private group composed of major shippers would provide the BOC with data on the kind and quantity of oil products ordered by importers at least 36 hours before arrival.

Prior to the signing of the MOA, the BOC would only know what goods entered the country's ports after the shipments arrive.

"The shippers will serve as a third-party information source. They will help in our audit function because customs officials would know early on what they should check out for when auditing," Arevalo said.

Arevalo, who replaced resigned Customs Commissioner Alberto Lina last month, said oil accounts for 15 percent of the BOC's revenues from duties.

The DOF head agency of the BOC has informed the use of a chemical technology that will help Customs personnel better detect smuggled oil products.

The DOF has directed the BOC to make use of the technology within the next month or two, Arevalo said.

The BOC didn't said the technology involved the use of a certain chemical – a colorless dye – that will mark oil products whose duties have been paid by the importers.

Arevalo said the BOC would secure the chemical technology and would implement its use for auditing with the help of the local petroleum industry.

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The nightmare of a federal government

QUESTIONS OF POLICY

Rosario C. Gonzalez

JOSE V. Abueva's dream of a Philippine federal republic with a parliamentary government is one enormous nightmare.

In his book, Change for Good Governance, Abueva wants to revise the Constitution and break up the Philippines into 11 independent states: Bangsamoro (ARMM), Davao Region & Central Mindanao, Zamboanga Peninsula & Northern Mindanao, Central & Eastern Visayas, Western Visayas-Palawan, Bicol, Southern Luzon, Metro Manila (NCR), Central Luzon, Cordillera and Northern Luzon.

The provinces in each state will be fused. For example, in the State of Southern Luzon, the provinces of Rizal, Cavite, Batangas, Quezon, Aurora, Marinduque, Occidental, Mindoro Oriental, Masbate, Romblon will disappear from the map as separate entities.

Abueva does not say where the capital of the State of Southern Luzon will be.

Will it be Antipolo? Pasig? Cavite? Batangas? Lucena? Why not Calapan or Boac? The choice will already be a contentious issue among the Tagalogs.

Never in history

Then, the 11 states will be stitched into the Federal Republic of the Philippines.

Never in history has a country been divided into smaller communities and punched up together again as a federation.

In all the federations formed around the world, the member states existed long before the decision to federate was made.

The first federation was the United States. After winning the Revolutionary War against the British, the American could not quite figure out exactly what to do. But the governors of the 13 colonies that had been in existence for about 100 years were adamant.

None wanted to give up his turf. Thus, the federation was formed.

The four original members of the Canadian federation—Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick...had existed for about 100 years before they decided that they would be economically stronger if they federate.

The Federal Republic of Germany organized after World War II, consists of states, such as Bavaria, Brune and Saxony that trace their origins to medieval times.

Unsure home, the Malaysian federation is composed of sultanates established by the British during their long colonial rule.

Abueva wants to form the federation in two stages.

The more developed states can be operational within the first five years. The less developed states will be given 10 years to qualify for membership.

Transition period

During the 20-year transition period, the Philippines will be neither fish nor fowl. The instability all over the archipelago will be unimaginable.

Even if the country survives the transition period, breaking up the Philippines into 11 independent states is inherently dangerous.

It could lead to secession...possibly civil war—and ultimately total disintegration.

Almost 80 years after the Declaration of Independence, the US was locked in a terrible civil war where the southern states seceded. More Americans died in that war than in all the wars afterwards put together.

Yugoslavia, the federation forged by Marshal Tito, is now completely broken up. The USSR (at the Baltic states and more states, like Chechnya, want to break away.

Abueva wants the Filipino people to sail into uncharted seas, in a leaky boat, steered by dreamers who cannot see beyond the bed linen.

Any thinking about it scares me half to death. (Next week I will take up Abueva's ideas on a parliamentary government.)

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Customs cracks down on tax credit fraud

By Michelle V. Reyes

THE BUREAU of Customs has created a body that will crack down on those suspected of engaging in tax credit fraud.

Alexander Arevalo, Customs officer-in-charge, has ordered the establishment of the Tax Credit Committee to be composed of senior officials of the BOC.

Tax credit fraud has resulted in billions of pesos in lost revenue for the cash-strapped government, Arevalo said.

The BOC chief said the committee would study ways on how certificates and unscrupulous individuals misuse tax credit fraud, and come up with measures to stop these activities. The committee is also expected to suggest measures to facilitate the granting of tax credits to legitimate claimants.

Tax credit fraud usually comes in the form of selling either fake or stand tax credit certificates (TCCs). It is also committed by individuals or groups who falsely claim to have wasted tax credits and then apply for TCCs.

The biggest cases of tax credit fraud to date are the cases involving the couple Fuentes and Gloria Chingkoe, and the Tan family headed by ex-marine Jack Gesmundo.

The Chingkoes and the Tans were alleged to have sold fraudulently secured TCCs to various companies. The transferees of the TCCs used the certificates to pay their taxes.

This illegal practice is said to have cost the government almost P6 billion in potential taxes.

The creation of the Tax Credit Committee followed an earlier directive of the BOC to temporarily suspend the sale of TCCs while the agency was studying how to prevent cases of tax credit fraud.

Arevalo last month took over from resigned Customs Commissioner Alberto Lina.

The BOC, the second biggest revenue source of the government, failed to meet its collection target for the first seven months of the year.

Pre-need firm pins hopes on recovery scheme

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

COLLEGE ASSURANCE Plan Philippines Inc. (CAP) is now pinning its hopes on a recovery plan it submitted to the government regulator on Friday, hoping to continue its business and possibly even post a turnaround.

CAP said the Securities and Exchange Commission did not return copies of the recovery plan on Friday.

But according to CAP lawyer Delgado Tolibao of Tolibao, Bengzon & Reyes Law offices, the plan is a standstill calls for equity and capital infusion using proceeds from the development of its real estate projects and BOT bonds.

"If CAP is allowed to continue as an ongoing concern, it could turn the company around," Tolibao said.

Theoretical

The scheme also called for measures to trim expenses and manage liabilities.

CAP said that, under the recovery plan, it could beef up its fund to P2.6 billion in eight years.

Tolibao said the proposed trust fund build-up would also ...ways out the present firm's supposed deficit of P777 million.

Tolibao said that the deficiency in the trust fund "is more theoretical than real, it is part of our challenges and arguments against the [SEC's] show cause order."

Rehabilitation

CAP sees the court-...ment of its plan ...ers.

But should the SEC insist on taking over the troubled pre-need firm and rejecting its reorganization plans, CAP would be forced to take the fight to court, Tolibao said.

Tolibao also said that CAP is not shirking its duties to a possible rehabilitation petition to be filed with the local courts, as CAP's corporate Plan ...orate Plan and Parish Plans Inc.

"In terms of filing for rehab, CAP is not prioritizing that option, but it is always an option for us," Tolibao said. "We will interview ...reorganizers and determine what is in the best interest of the plan holders."

CAP said it is also aware that it would challenge SEC move to place the firm under a management committee "to the point of expulsion." It said such authority could only be exercised as an incident of the SEC's quasi-judicial functions ...already transferred to the regular court. The challenge came out in CAP's 46-page response submitted to the SEC on Friday.

CAP is now pushing to be given its dealer's license back, which was suspended in August last year when the pre-need firm ran into financial problems.

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Banks raise stakes in real estate stocks, debt papers

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY's commercial banks have been increasing their investments in real estate stocks and debt papers, indicating optimism on the real estate sector's recuperation from the slump caused by the Asian currency turmoil of 1997.

The banks' investments in securities issued by real estate companies surged by 45.3 percent as of end-March to P137 billion from a year ago, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said.

The BSP said banks' lending to the real estate sector accounted for 1.9 percent or P282 billion in the same period but this was because part of their exposures was sold through Special Purpose Vehicles (securitization).

The increase in non-loan real estate exposure of banks was driven by the rise in equity investments to P1.1 billion from only P6.6 billion a year ago. The rise consisted of investments in collateralized papers of real estate companies, which stood at P24.98 billion as of end-March from P1.1 billion.

Compared to a year ago, the commercial bank sector's real estate loan exposure—including those booked by their trust departments—fell by 2.4 percent.

As a result, the share of real estate loans to the industry's total outstanding loans declined to 11.1 percent from 11.8 percent a quarter ago and 11.1 percent a year ago.

Of the total loan exposure, 96.4 percent represented lending by the banks, with the rest by their trust departments. About 84.5 percent of the total loans was granted to commercial projects, while 15.5 percent was extended to individual borrowers for the acquisition of residential units.

The BSP said the decline in the real estate loans as of end-March was influenced by the reclassification of these universal banks.

"The real estate loans of these banks dropped by a total of P9.5 billion due to full payments made by borrowers and sales of real estate loans to SPVs," the BSP said.

The EPC Law reduced the taxes and fees usually collected in connection with the sale or transfer of assets. It waived the documentary stamp tax, capital gains tax and VAT (ex. painted value added tax) and reduced the registration fee (transfer fees by 50 percent).

Real estate loans exposure: 91.5 percent of the industry's total P199.3 billion exposure to the real estate industry during the period. The rest includes investments in securities issued by real estate companies.

The stocks of the banks' past due real estate loans declined to 10.5 percent from 21.9 percent a year ago.

DBP fund . . .

From page B1

Locally produced ethanol will come from Sue Carlos Bio-Energy Inc. (SCBI), a joint venture between the National Development Corp. and Biomass-to-Philippines.

Upon the start of commercial operations in 2007, the SCBI integrated facility in San Carlos, Negros Occidental will be able to produce some 100,000 liters of bio-ethanol a day in its distillery plant.

It will also have a cane-milling plant with a throughput capacity of 1,500 metric tons of cane daily as well as a co-generation power plant that will produce around 9 megawatts (MW) of power, of which 4 MW will be sold to the grid.

David said SCBI was one of the firms that expressed interest in tapping the DBP loan facility.

Apart from ethanol projects, he said the DBP was also looking at providing funding for wind and solar power projects.

"But we'd like to see more hydro and geothermal, including mini-hydro projects," he said.

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Surging crude puts RP . . .

(From page B1)

The world's daily oil demand now stands at 87 million barrels, with the potential of jumping to 140 million barrels in the next 30 years. While global reserves of reserves are 1.147 million barrels, supplies will run out in 30 years.

According to the US Department of Energy, global output must grow by 45.3 million barrels a day to satisfy global demand. Without new investments are followed in the oil sector, supplies may run out in as early as 25 years.

In a paper titled "Facing Oil Prices and the Crippling of Our Economy," Energy Undersecretary Jesse Anthony alleges says the necessary investments to increase supply to keep up with demand come up to a whopping $3 trillion.

With China's rapidly improving economy, more and more Chinese are expected to own vehicles in the coming years, further jacking up fuel demand. Right now, each China resident consumes about two barrels of a year. An average American, on the other hand, uses 30 barrels of oil annually.

If the average China man catches up with an average American's lifestyle, alleges says China's demand will go up by 45 billion barrels a year, enough to wipe out the Saudi Arabian oil reserves in less than five years.

"Indications of peaking supplies are more evident now than ever. Thus, with less oil available, competition for it will increase, and the struggle for its control will become more and more acute than ever. World prices are expected to continue surging to new highs," he says.

According to statements from the Department of Energy, the regional benchmark Dubai crude surged to an average of $58.4 barrel in the first 10 days of August, more than $5 higher than the July average of $53.83. Its highest price ever was recorded Aug. 12 at $67.804 barrel.

Local scenario

With international oil prices escalating to historic highs, the Philippines, which imports nearly all of its oil requirements, has not been able to escape the harsh reality of the situation. However, local pump prices remain have not been as high as they should be.

While world prices of unleaded gasoline have increased by 36 percent since December, Shops says local pump prices have gone up by less than half that rate. World diesel prices have risen by 29 percent, but local prices have not increased as much.

"If bull prices take like at present levels, we are looking at P2.50-3.00 a liter increase for gasoline and about 50 centavos a liter more for diesel. It does not seem that prices are ready to soak all 1 bounce among global demand for fuel," bank senior Supervisor," he says.

He adds that the relatively moderate rise in world diesel prices is anticipated with those of unleaded gasoline since December's lowest seen for sudden spikes.

It is highly possible for diesel prices to surge past the $77.04-a-barrel all-time high posted early last month and even breach $80 for the first time ever in the coming months, he says.

"I think prices will continue to increase in the months beginning to be reflected in pull would prices further up, particularly those of diesel, as it is mainly used in hauling fuel.

Since the start of the year, gasoline and diesel prices have both increased 13 times for a total of P7.80 and P7.55 a liter, respectively.

On a broader scope, the country's oil import bill has risen dramatically from only 7.7 percent of gross domestic product in 1999, to 22 percent last year, one of the worst in Asia, Shops notes in the paper.

For the first five months of the year, the country's oil import bill soared 47.3 percent to $2.3 billion from only $1.6 billion in the same period last year, despite the 6.6-percent decline in actual oil demand.

Hurting large oil users

The rise in world oil prices has had a domino effect on prices of commodities and services, particularly in the public transport sector.

The oil-intensive airline industry, for example, has seen fuel outlays eat up more of its operating expenses since the start of the year.

Inside Alsons, general manager of Lobang, one-armed Gibo Pardo Ala said fuel now accounts for about 36 percent of the company's overall costs, rising from 26 percent in early 2004.

Jet fuel now costs about $70 a barrel against $45 a year ago. In May 2005, the price of jet fuel was only $40 a barrel. In May 2004, it was just $28.25 a barrel.

To further cope with rising fuel costs, local carriers Cebu Pacific and Philippine Airlines, as with their foreign counterparts, have sought—and were given—the Civil Aeronautics Board's nod to increase fares.

The airline industry is not the only one calling for the seemingly incessant rise in oil prices. The operators are likewise intending the surge in oil prices as fuel costs now account for 40 to 50 percent of their operating expenses from only about 20 percent since years ago.

Integrated Shipping Operations president Clara Gida-Fuerte says that despite the P2/liter increase that the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board has approved its ordinary fares, the more successful fuel price increases have prompted bus operators to seriously consider seeking another round of fare hikes.

"But the problem with raising our fares again is that people may no longer ride buses. They may shift to other modes of transport or just choose to stay home during the weekends instead of go out," she says.

Crippling the economy

On a macroeconomic level, the rise in oil prices will not only boost inflation but will also cut the country's GDP growth.

Economic Planning Secretary Augusto Santos says that if world crude prices hit the range of $60 to $70 a barrel for the balance of the year, the 2006 inflation rate will surge to 6.1 percent.

Higher prices will then dampen domestic demand, cutting GDP growth by 5.2 percent if crude price reaches $60 a barrel or 5.1 percent if crude price reaches $70 from an original forecast of 5.5 percent.

"The unprecedentedly continuous rise in oil prices, which is clearly beyond our country's control, poses significant challenges to the country's economic growth. What is potential, as the results show, is that the Philippine economy is resilient to oil price shocks," Santos says.

So in how realistic, the country's economic managers are not about to just sit around and wait for a confirmation of facts. Measures have already been prepared to help the economy cope with further expected oil price spikes. Palatable or not, some of those measures may just have to be shouted down. Fit, spinal through if only to save the country from the oil-related economic collapse.

(To be continued)

Breaking down . . .

(From page B1)

players like Petron Corp. and Pilipinas Shell, which have their own refineries.

This stands in stark contrast to the pre-1998 regulated environment where raw material costs accounted for only a third of the price of gasoline pump. On the average, only 36 percent of the pump price is shared among dealers and brokers, the oil firms, and the government (in the form of duties and taxes) under the deregulated regime.

What this means is that the Oil Deregulation Law exposed the local consumers to the volatile crude oil price movements abroad, but also reduced the amount collected by the government and the oil firms under the regulated regime.

Main importantly, the situation for diesel fuel is even more exhorbitant of international market conditions, according to the BIC's study. Under the deregulated regime, 70 percent of what consumers pay for diesel fuel is attributable directly to the cost of raw materials and production.

On the average, only 22 percent goes to duties and taxes, the oil firms, and the diesel dealers and haulers, all firms that import all their diesel inventory costs four to five percent on every liter they sell to the pumps.

Finally, the BIC study also reveals that prices for the oil important by-product petroleum gas (LPG)—which is used mainly by household and industrial cooking—is over more dependent on the movements of international crude oil prices.

According to the BIC, 85 percent of the LPG price is attributable directly to raw materials and production costs; up from only 60 percent in 1998.

On the average, about half of the country's petroleum needs are imported as finished products while the other half is refined locally using imported crude oil.

Barrel breakdown

Every barrel of crude oil the country buys is refined into different petroleum products, with LPG and gasoline accounting only for a fraction of the 159 liters that each barrel holds.

The bulk come out of the refining process in the form of diesel fuel and fuel oil that are used for industrial and other industrial applications.

While Dubai crude oil is priced at $67.20 a barrel on Monday, a full barrel of gasoline alone would cost $67.20. Surprisingly, a barrel of diesel at prevailing international market prices would cost up to $94.25.

Diesel is more expensive than gasoline, which is the opposite of the local situation where diesel is cheaper than gasoline—a phenomenon attributed by local petroleum firms to the political pressure of selling a "socially acceptable" product like diesel.

As it stands, the BIC believes that the consumers are not even feeling to full brunt of the effects of deregulation.

Analysts show that "the theoretical prices of oil products are much higher than the actual pump prices," it says. Thus, it concludes that "oil product price increases were mainly caused by the price devaluation and the increase in the world price of Dubai crude, not deregulation."

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GMA earmarking ₱700M for expansion

By Clarissa S. Batino

GMA Network Inc. is spending at least P700 million this year to assist new investments in expansion projects in other major local economic regions in the country and catch up with the rising load of its fierce rival entertainment broadcaster.

Annette Gozon, executive vice president of GMA, said the network would spend P200 million for infrastructure that would improve its signal and reach in nineteen areas, including Cebu, Davao, Dagupan, Naga, Bacolod and Iloilo.

The amounts will cover new antennas and transmitters needed to make GMA's broadcast in those areas as superior as that in Mega Manila, where it leads in the ratings.

This is on top of the amounts contracted for marketing, promotion and news programs, which will be launched in Cebu, Davao and Iloilo.

The country's most profitable broadcast firm is also allocating P500 million for the construction of two new studios in the GMA complex in Quezon City.

GMA president Felipe Gozon said the two studios would be built on a 5,000-square meter lot. He said the studios would be able to accommodate an audience of 1,000 each.

He said the ongoing studio expansion was necessary with the forthcoming telecasts of Channel 11, whose programming would come from ABS-CBN. Channel 11 will start accustomed operations in November.

Channel 11 is owned by evangelist Eddie Villanueva's Jesus is Lord Movement. Villanueva and GMA signed a deal last year for GMA to operate the station. The two parties will share Channel 11's profits.

GMA has kept its ruling hold in Mega Manila area. BELTRAN Broadcasting Corp., based on the latest survey,

Gov't may junk ₱3-B NDC float

By Roncel W. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT may shelve the planned P3-billion bond float of National Development Co., which was aimed at raising funds for infrastructure projects that support the agriculture sector.

Trade Secretary Peter D. Favila said a bond issue, which the NDC board has yet to approve, would push through if it would not entail a guarantee from the national government.

Favila said NDC, the government's investment unit, was instead eyeing part of the government financial institutions' proceeds from agricultural loans.

Presidential Decree No. 717, which aims at providing credit and financing system for agrarian reform efforts, requires government and private banking institutions to set aside a quarter of their loanable funds for agriculture projects.

"We are looking at how we can get portion of the proceeds from these loans for infrastructure projects related to (agrarian reform projects)," he said.

"But right as well (as at least part of those proceeds for such projects because the proceeds, (when remitted to government coffers) go 'lost' in the national budget," he added.

Last month, the trade department announced it was set to offer NDC's Agri-Agra (AA) bonds to raise some P3 billion for agriculture and agrarian reform support facilities.

The 10-year AA Bonds will be obligations of the NDC with a direct and unconditional government guarantee. Buying the bonds will count as an alternative means for banks to comply with the mandates of RO 717.

The planned bond issue was supposed to succeed for the third tranche of NDC's AA bonds issued following Executive Order No. 83.

Signed in 1998, EO No. 83 provided for the issuance of long-term bonds aimed at supporting projects for economic growth under a revitalized rural development program.

Ongpin group vows to turn around ETPI

By Clarissa S. Batino

BM CORPORATION Corp. of the Ongpin Group is confident it can turn around the operations of Eastern Telecommunications Phils. Inc.

BM Corp. president Jose Recto said the Ongpin Group wanted to complete its purchase of 57.7 percent of ETPI this year so it could start executing the country's oldest telecommunications company.

ETPI lost heavily in the last six years. It had accumulated more than P12 billion in losses and had not had a healthy capital infusion during the period.

Recto said the company would infuse new capital into ETPI for investments in new technology that would transform it into a more relevant company in the market.

"We think we have the solution to helping ETPI around," Recto said in an interview.

Last month, BM bought 17.7 percent of ETPI through a share swap with Ayreseas Investors & Managers Inc., a holding company linked to the Reyes family. Ayreseas will end up owning 8 to 10 percent of BM.

BM is also buying the 40 percent stake of Australian Gigaberic Network International Pty. Ltd.

The Ongpin Group had reportedly been scrambling to increase its telecommunications interest due to plans to bring in Li Ka-shing's Hutchison Whampoa Ltd. of Hong Kong into the country.

Recto however denied the speculations.

"I can categorically say that (BM) investment in ETPI no denial of any involvement with Hutchison or with Hutchison," said Recto.

Acer's "Power-Packed" promo extends until August

Another chance to get a free iPod Shuffle, printer, cell phone or memory upgrade with every purchase of an Acer notebook PC

Portability. Smart design. Hi-tech connectivity. Functionality. Now these are just some of the features that any mobile worker is sure to look for in a laptop. And until today, what affordably and value-for-money has also become major factors that need to be considered.

Acer, one of the world's leading computer brands, has extended its "power-packed" promo to give notebook PC users another chance to save more on their computer purchases until August. Added values in the form of 1-year international traveler's warranty as well as free instant gifts also come with each "power-packed" package.

Dubbed as the Acer Power-Packed Promo, the same runs for an extended period from August 1-31 and has been specially been designed to give more impetus another chance to own branded mobile notebooks to suit their needs at a price that's much more affordable than their counterparts in the market.

For the entire duration of the promo, a wider range of Acer TravelMate notebooks will be sold at exceptionally low, low prices ranging from P63,900 to P95,900.

The range includes Acer's TravelMate 8002WTCi that boasts of Intel® Pentium® M Processor 740 with 533MHz FSB 2 memory and 80GB HDD, a built-in card reader and integrated Bluetooth as well as an optional TV-tuner. It comes with a 14.1" WXGA wide screen color display — all packed in a lightweight, 1.4 kg frame. Early purchase of Acer's TravelMate 8002WTCi at selected Mall stores nationwide also comes with a free iPod Shuffle.

There's also Acer's TravelMate 4601LCi, TravelMate 4102WLCi and TravelMate 4101WLCi, all of which are powered by the latest Intel® Centrino® Mobile Technology that utilizes the dynamic combination of Intel processors, namely: TravelMate 4601LCi is fueled by Intel® Pentium® M Processor 750 (1.8 GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 533MHz FSB), with 512MB DDR 2 memory and 80GB HDD, and is priced at P89,500 with a FREE iPod Shuffle; TravelMate 4102WLCi, meanwhile, powered by Intel® Pentium® M Processor 740 (1.7GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 533MHz FSB) with 256MB DDR RAM memory and 60GB HDD. Priced at P84,900, it comes with an existing additional 1GB (512MB memory upgrade. What's more, in this promotion, interested customers had the option to buy TravelMate 4102WLCi at 10% interest for 12 months, wherein buyers will receive a P5,000 worth of Nike Gift Checks as an added bonus. For those still longing to buy Acer's TravelMate 4101WLCi, no need to worry. Also priced at an "only" P79,900 with Intel® Pentium® M 740 (1.7GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 533MHz FSB), 256MB DDR memory and 40GB HDD plus 15.4" WXGA TFT LCD widescreen color monitor, it will come with a FREE Nokia 3120 or a pick of P5,000.

For those with extremely limited budget, Acer's Aspire 2502WLCi (P49,900), TravelMate 4002LCi (P53,900) and TravelMate 2702WLM (P59,900) surely fits the bill. Buyers would still get the following freebies, such as: Sonic USB CDE Printer for every purchase of Aspire 2502WLCi; Nokia 2600 for every purchase of TravelMate 4002LCi and iPod Shuffle awaits buyers of TravelMate 2702WLM.

Acer's notebook PCs come installed with Windows XP Home and a built-in LAN and MDC modem. Each model, which comes in the new Acer Ruby design, comes complete with their own unique feature such as the Acer SignalUp Technology for instant connectivity and improved wireless performance by 20-40%; Acer eRecovery for simplified hard to recover contents and settings; Acer GridMedia that organizes your work in multi-window format; Acer CrystalBrite Technology that makes all images come alive in spectacular, cinematic color and a host of other features that will surely maximize one's computing experience.

For more details about the promo, interested parties may call the Acer Hotline at 815-3388 or call Axis Distribution, Inc. at 637-9999 and MSI-Digicom Philippines at 688-3333 or visit any Acer Authorized Retail Partners conveniently located all over the country. Visit Acer website at www.acer.com.ph

JG Summit to spend ₱12B more

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

JG SUMMIT Holdings Inc., the flagship company of the Gokongwei group, has earmarked a budget of ₱10 to ₱12 billion for projects lined up for the rest of the year.

JG Summit president Lance Gokongwei said that subsidiary Universal Robina Corp. (URC) would be putting up a beverage plant for its fast growing green tea brand "C2" in Asia.

No additional details were given.

Gokongwei said, however, that the bulk of the budget or 70 billion would be allotted for its telecommunications arm, Digital Telecommunications Phils. Inc. (Digitel).

The balance will be distributed between consumer brand unit URC and property firm Robinsons Land Corp.

Property unit RLC is currently building residential condominiums, such as The Gateway Residences and The Ashmans Residences.

It will also expand its malls.

Gokongwei also said that aside from the ₱150-₱2 billion it would spend for the second half of the year, JG Summit would spend roughly $600 million to buy out Cebu Pacific.

JG Summit recently reported a 24.1 percent growth in its net income to ₱1.71 billion in the first half this year from ₱1.36 billion in the same period last year.

In an unaudited report filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), JG Summit said consolidated revenues were up 6.4 percent to ₱52.36 billion, driven by the improvement in sales and revenues of the group's core businesses, food and real estate development plus the contributions of its telecommunications business.

PLDT promo to stay

By Christa S. Reyes

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PLDT Vice President for Corporate Communications Ramon R. Isberto said the promo will run for six months, starting Sept. 22.

Isberto, however, said PLDT's senior vice president and head of retail, said the company would change a minimum of consumption threshold of ₱20 a month for those willing to subscribe to the P30 call rate.

"With this promo now (the) subscribers can enjoy and to make cheaper unlimited SUC calls without having to worry about providing huge phone bills," Isberto said.

The promo, which started on Feb. 14, helped restore customer interest in landline services. PLDT's P30 call rate will be initially available within its network of two million customers.

"PLDT's promo now plus my non-texter calls to other land line and mobile phone carrier," said Isberto.

The company's head of legal Angelo Quesada said the P30 call rate can be made available to competitors once they agree to cut the first ₱20 charge in calls coming from PLDT.

"EXTENDED Story: War of the Roses," by Mell Pleyading

"PUSO," by Fred Cuban

"ELEVI ra Ating Kalaglagan," by Pablo Buena Santos

Pinoy artists show mastery of a difficult medium

Life in watercolor

By Gino Dumlaoisin
Contributor

OME shows an serious art enthusiast should exist is the "Armand Kuley sa 'Ruby International Watercolor Competition.'"

It is, after all, more than just a canvas of skills and creativity with the noninvasive medium. It is a seasonal undertaking by both organizers (Dimar and Cheli's Salon of Gallery Genesis) and all the noninvasive invited to show their choice awe etc., without restrictions on subject matter and mode of treatment.

Now on its 22nd year, Kuley sa Ruby (Art Center and Gallery Genesis, 106 Magsaysay), received over 90 entries, executed on slightly big gr format than before.

There were the Hall of Famers, those who won the top prize three and most continually adhere to the high standards expected of winners. A few names have been added to this elite group, validating our claim that many are lured to the medium but only a few are chosen.

As a member of the jury this year (together with Jim Torres, Jun de Leon, Allen Guillermo, sculptor Jack Way, jack Soriano and Arthur Isaac), I confess the judges reached a consensus on the top winners really in the judging.

In fact, the Top 30 emerged without much fuss, the jury quickly scanning the room from the hour, so to speak.

Though facility with watercolor was essential, what was deemed more important was the ability to show an idiosyncratic touch that bordered on originality, a winning style that existed more than just a cursory glance.

The Top 5 this year included Mike Rueta Santos, Cidney Gabasio, Fred Cuban, Aster Belarmino and Chris Myong.

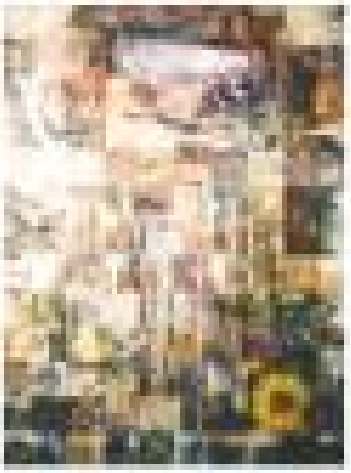
Rueta Santos' "Elim sa Ating Kalaglagan" shows a flood-drenched landscape, people escaping nature's wrath—a scene straight out of Exodus.

Gabasio, who does figurative works equally well, has always gone back to abstraction for competitions. In "Impetus," he splashes a field of color, accented by swirling lines of curvilinear orientation.

Cuban, who hails from Cebu, has a still life, the strikingly charming "Puso" dangling from a

Life in watercolor

Pinoy Pride, p. 11



"UNCHAINED Melody" by Alex Sebastian

"IMPETUS," by Cora Gabaldon

"REFLECTION" II, by Christian Hirsig

IAME – alternative school to UP, Ateneo and DLSU

The Makati-based International Academy of Management and Economics (IAME) has evolved into an alternative school with the influx of students from UP, Ateneo, De La Salle University, and UA and P University and consequence of lecturers from these universities in the IAME management class.

These developments came as a surprise to IAME because it does not have any plan to attract students from these universities, said Eduardo Dizon, J.V. Quiaoit, Jr., Ateneo MBA graduate and formerly lecturer in the Ateneo graduate school of business.

Quiaoit said the well-attached a word to the Ph. D. in Management program of IAME because it is the only doctoral program in management conducted by DLSU. He heard about IAME by word of mouth from its alumni and students who talk of the global quality of business education being offered and conducted at IAME.

Bobbi Malaya, Jr., an M.S. Management graduate of ANE, entrepreneur and part-time lecturer at the Ateneo graduate school of business, said she enrolled in the IAME Ph.D. in Management program because of its globally oriented curriculum and the high level of class presentations and discussions which she found both fulfilling and satisfying at the end of the week-end sessions.

Felix Lim, a CPA graduate and part-time lecturer of DLSU, finds the topics of presentations and discussions helpful to his job as country manager, regional manager, and global quality manager of a US multinational corporation based in Silicon Valley in California.

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